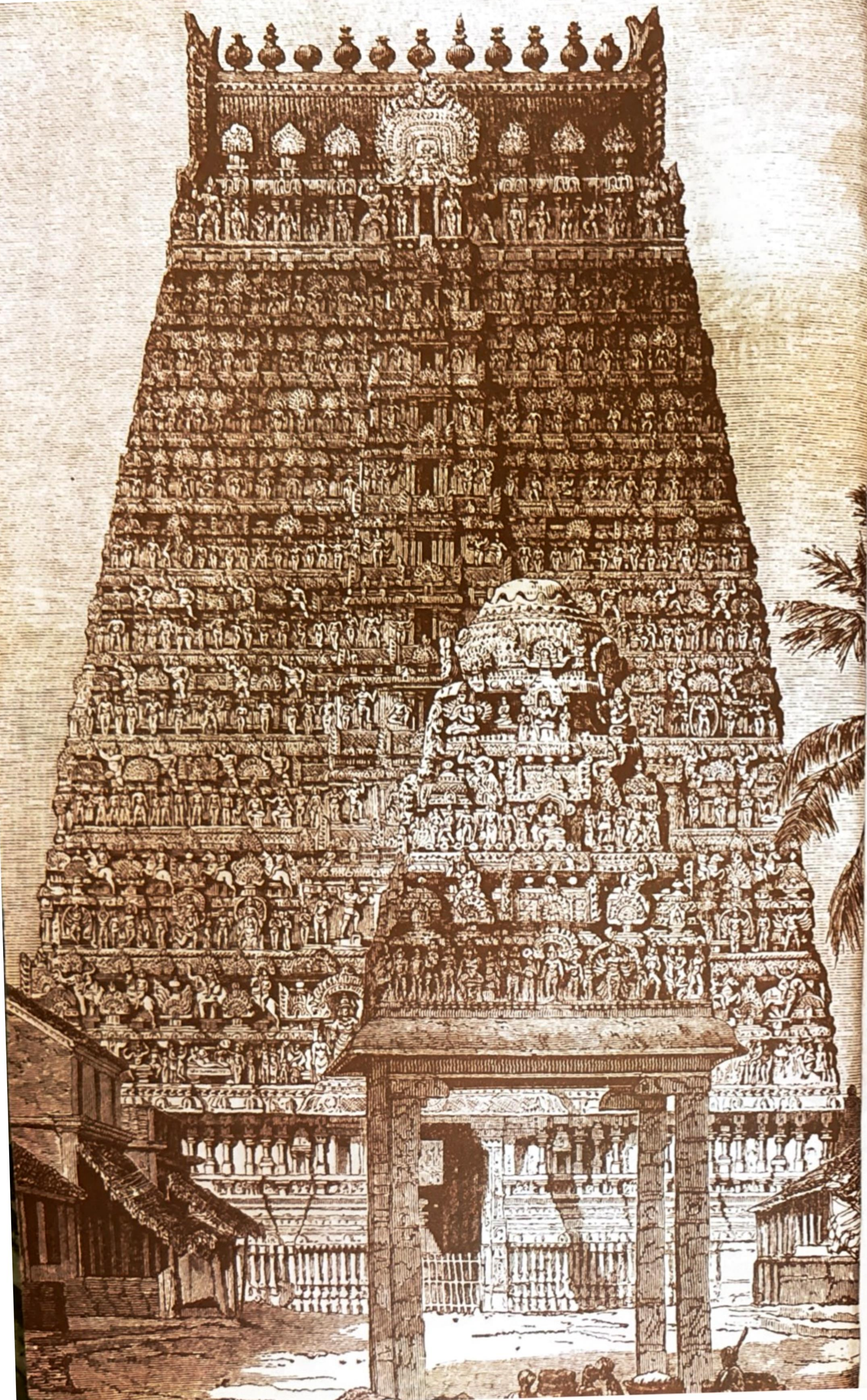
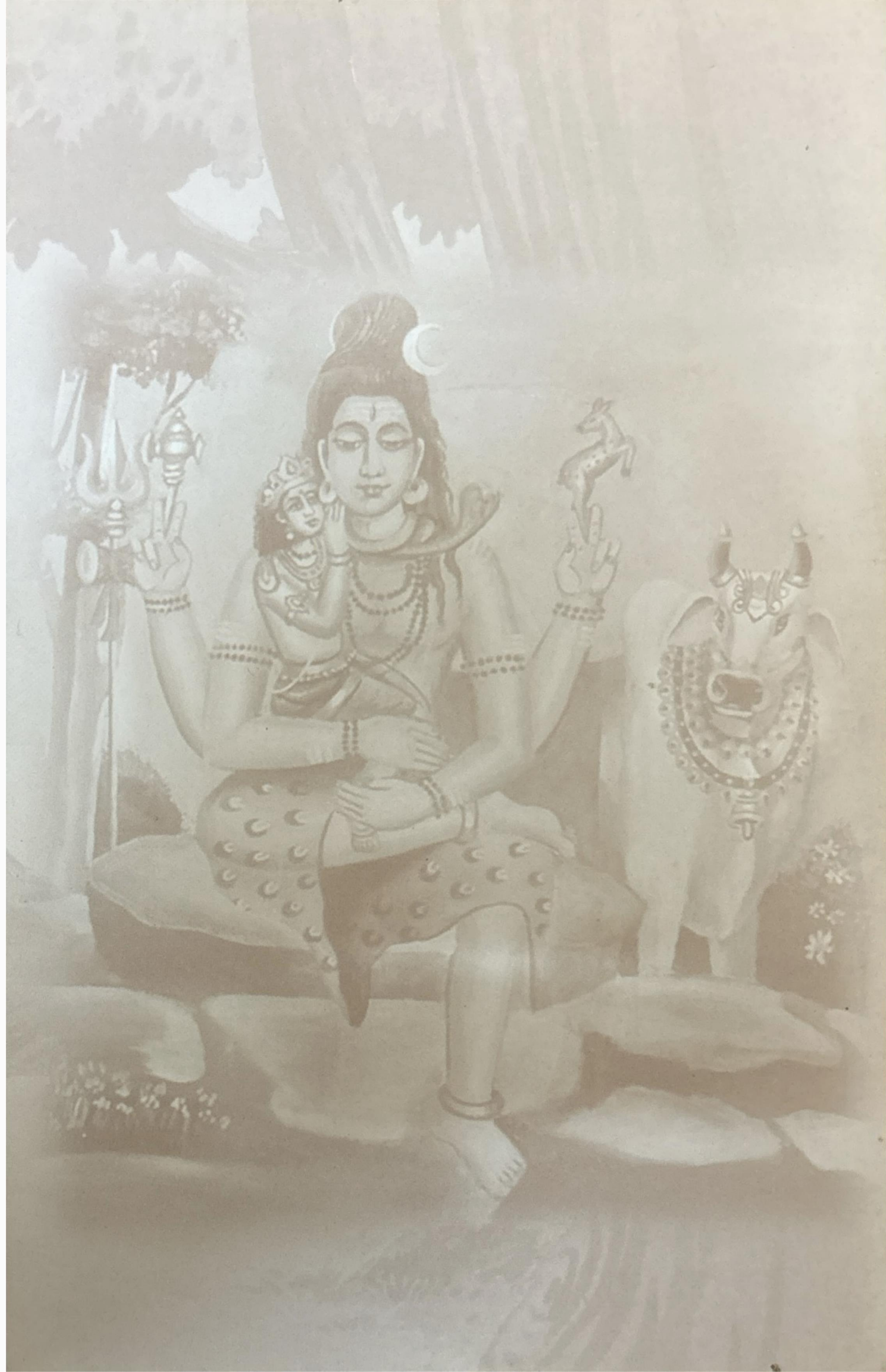
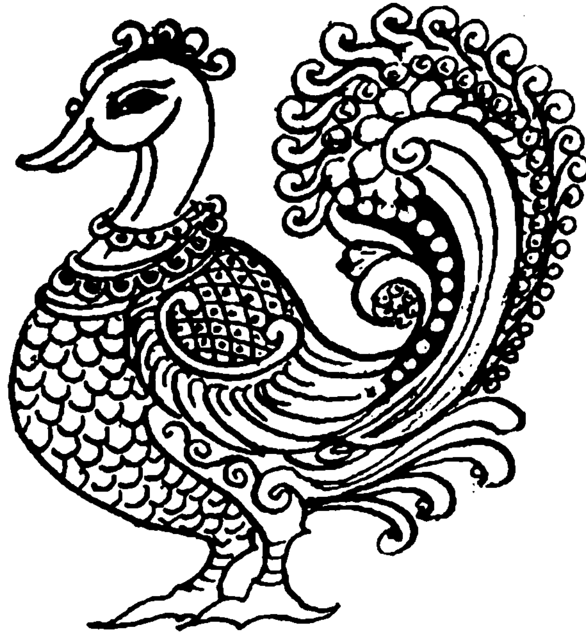
NAYANAR SAINTS







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Foreword

Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of the five basic elements. He has manifested Himself as the principle of Prithivi, Appu, Thejas, Vayu and Akasha—in Kanchi as Sri Ekambareshwara, in Thiruvanaikoil as Sri Jambukeshwara, in Thiruvannamalai as Sri Arunachaleshwara, in Sri Kalahasti as Sri Kalahastishwara and in Chidambaram as Sri Chidambareshwara, respectively.

This book is a saga of devotion on Lord Shiva. It narrates in a simple and flowing style, the chronicle of devotees, most of whom have the appellation of 'Nayanar' suffixed to their names. They are all collectively called as 'Nayanmars'. Devotion to Lord Shiva is everything to them. He is their life-breath. Their body is His temple. Their mind is His sanctum sanctorum. Their acts are a penance to seek His Lotus Feet. Their life itself is a pilgrimage towards His blissful abode.

In this book, we find that these Nayanmars think only about Lord Shiva and spend their entire life meditating on His glorious aspects and attributes. All their emotions are turned towards Him and their moods

for ever swing high or low in the divine frequency of the Lord Shiva. They wish to speak, sing and hear only His praise. They always long to have direct touch with Him and witness His presence everywhere.

Each of these Nayanmars have the remarkable and unsurpassed trait of having some singular and sacred vow that they self-impose in the name of Lord Shiva, from which they never budge on any account. They consider the obstacles that arise and the ordeals they have to undergo for the fulfilment of their unique vows, as the test of the Lord Shiva Himself to show to themselves as to how far they have advanced in their spiritual life.

Lord Shiva who drank poison to protect His creation and who kicked Yama Himself to protect Markandeya, takes immense delight in educating the world, the dynamics of devotion through these Nayanmars. He takes on various roles, sports suitable appearances and stages His divine plays in their devotional lives. In each of these divine plays, His contextual divine antics match the mood of the moment and the hurdles He seems to wilfully create in their spiritual path only serve to exhibit their nobility and reveal the secret essence of devotion to the humanity.

These Nayanmars are the role models of a devotional conscience. They consider the service done to the society and to other devotees as service done to the Lord Shiva Himself. We witness that there is cent percent give and take between the devotee and the Lord. Lord Shiva is ever ready to do the bidding of the faithful devotee. He gives the devotee, the concession and courage to command Him and He abides by the devotee's instructions to the letter.

We also see that the Lord is the most humble when it comes to serving His devotees and is looked upon by the devotee as his bosom friend. For instance, He cheerfully acts as an intermediary between the devotee Sundara and his would-be bride Sangiliar. He who is omnipotent, does not mind to go even for begging for the sake of His devotees as He does for Nambi Aroorar. We are enabled to discern the divine attributes of the Lord and the invincible faith of the devotee through each of these divine episodes.

The life history of the Nayanmars, which is a devotional treasure, occupies a prominent place in the Saivite literature. Those who read this book with devotion will definitely be touched by the in-tune relationship these 'Nayanmars' have always with lord Shiva and the matchless divine exploits that the Lord resort to, to disclose to the world the greatness of piety and that anyone with firm and unswerving faith in Him will definitely attain His Venerable Feet.

I convey the gracious blessings of His Holiness Sri Sri Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamigal who now adorns Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham as its 36th pontiff, for the success of this book and for this book to kindle the magnetic flame of devotion in the earnest reader to take him more effectively Godward so that he can realize that God is immanent in creation and each of the happening in our lives, irrespective of its apparent favourable or unfavourable result for us, is a divine dispensation that is intended to purify our minds and hearts and conducive to our spiritual well-being to the extent we are aware of its divine significance.

(V. R. Gowrishankar)

श्री:

Preface

"Swadhyaya"—reading a scripture is one of the means to purify ourselves. Upanishad declares that "Swadhyaya" is a must. Also a man's best friend is a good book. With this intention, the book written in Kannada under the title *'Nayanar Santaru'* has been translated into English for the sake of wider circulation. Let us hope that this edition induces devotion and detachment in the hearts of the readers and thus brings peace in their hearts.

Let Lord Parameshwara Bless us all with Bliss.

Bangalore
1-12-2011

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1. Sundaramurthy Nayanar

There is a place called Thirunavalur in the Dravidian kingdom. Here the Brahmins were doing their duties and living peacefully. Shadaiyanar was a great man who belonged to this community. His wife was Isaignaniyar. Sundarar was born to this couple. He was named Nambi Arooraran when he was born. He grew up like a full moon. He played on the streets of Thirunavalur, adorned with expensive jewelery and a gold thread on his waist. The people of Thirunavalur were pleased to see him. The king of that place, Narasingamunaiyaraiyar, who was on his way to Bhavani, was pleased to see the child. With the permission of his parents, he took the boy to the palace. He grew up in the palace itself following the Brahmin rituals. He became a great scholar, learning the Shastras, the Puranas and the ancient history. As per the saying in Sanskrit, 'Vidya Vinayena Shobhate' he grew up to become a great scholar and a humble person. The king and his parents started discussing about his marriage.

The daughter of Shadangavi Shivachariyar living in a place called Puttur, was found to be a suitable bride to Nambi Aroorar in age, character, education and all aspects. Then Aroorar's father sent word to the girl's house and got their acceptance. They fixed an auspicious day for the wedding. Narasingamunaiyarayar made preparations for the wedding in accordance with his status.

They decorated the mantap in Puttur also. All the houses were decorated with great zeal. The people were eager to see Nambi Aroorar. He was adorned with a

sacred paste of sandal, garland and expensive jewelery. He reached Puttur on a horse and was welcomed by the people of Puttur with great pomp. The people thought that Shadangavi Shivachariyar's daughter was very lucky to get such a good husband and also felt that they were very lucky to get such a good son-in-law.

Nambi Aroorar was very handsome and looked like Manmatha. He reached the wedding mantap in Puttur with his relatives. The girl was also adorned with a lot of jewelery and scented flowers and taken to the wedding mantap. A large number of people had gathered to witness the wedding.



At that moment Lord Shiva came there disguised as an old Brahmin with the sacred thread shining on his chest, holding an umbrella in his right hand and a stick in his left hand. He had covered his third eye with Vibhooti (holy ash). The people were surprised to see the brightness on his face and welcomed him. Then the old man said, "There is a dispute between me and Nambi Aroorar. He has to find a solution to that problem and then marry." Like an iron piece that gets attracted to

the magnet, Nambi Aroorar was enchanted by the sweet words of the Brahmin and said, "O revered one, I bow to your feet. You are like Lord Shiva. Respecting your words, I shall solve the problem and then marry. Please do not have any doubts and you can tell me your problem without any hesitation."

Hearing this, the old man smiled and said, "Oh People! Listen to me. Nambi Aroorar is my servant." Nambi Aroorar laughed and said, "How can one Brahmin be a slave to another one?". Hearing the old man's words some people became angry and some made fun of him. Nambi Aroorar even asked him if he had gone mad to utter these words. Lord Shiva disguised as an old man said, "I have a letter written by your grandfather." Nambi Aroorar who could not understand that the Lord himself has come to protect him became angry and asked him to give him the letter. He tore the palm leaf letter as soon as he got it from the old man. For this the old man pretended to be angry and said "I shall go to Thiruvennainallur where I reside and ask for justice." Nambi Aroorar also told him to go wherever he wanted to and followed him.

They reached Thiruvennainallur and entered an assembly where all learned scholars were present and told them, "O great noble Brahmins! We bow down to you. Please give a solution to our problem." One of the men said, "Welcome to You. You may tell us Your problem." Then Lord Gangadhara said, "This person, Nambi Aroorar, who has come with me should be my servant according to a letter written by his grandfather. He has torn the letter that I had with me. Fortunately the letter is not the original one. I have hidden the original letter. Now, please solve this problem and give me justice".

The noble men asked him to show the original letter. He said that he would show them the letter if they promised to protect the letter from Nambi Aroorar. Then the noble men told him not to worry and told him to show the letter without any fear. Having obtained it, one of them read the letter which said thus: "I am a Brahmin residing in Thirunavalur writing this. I and my family shall serve the father of Thiruvennainallur with great devotion. Yours Arooran". Hearing this, the noble men told Nambi Aroorar that the letter was indeed from his grandfather and that accordingly he should be an obedient servant to the old Brahmin. Nambi Aroorar agreed to this and said that he should respect the noble men and his grand father's words. One of the men asked the old Brahmin to show the house where he lived in Thiruvennainallur.

The Lord who had disguised himself as an old Brahmin asked them to follow him to his house. He entered the temple and was not to be seen anywhere. Nambi Aroorar and the other Brahmins who also entered the temple could not find the Brahmin and were surprised. Without knowing what to do, Nambi Aroorar went inside and called the Brahmin loudly.



Lord Shankara and Devi Parvathi appeared on the holy bull and said "O Nambi Aroorar, you were my attendant in Kailasa (Lord Shiva's abode). There you loved two of Parvathi's servants, Kamalini and Anindita. You are born on this earth as per my command

to marry them and enjoy your life. I rescued you from the customary marriage." Just like a calf crying after hearing the mother's voice, Nambi Aroorar who heard these words cried with joy. With folded hands he exclaimed, "O Lord! How can I praise your kindheartedness for coming from Kailasa just for me and blessing me." Then there was a shower of flowers and music from celestial instruments were heard.

The Lord said, "From this day onwards you shall be called as 'Vanthondan' because you spoke impolitely to me without accepting the people's words in the assembly. The service you have to do to me is to sing melodiously in praise of me in Tamil language." Nambi Aroorar asked the Lord how he could sing in praise of Him as he was dumb. Lord Shiva blessed him and told him to start the first song by the same word 'Pittha' which he had called him earlier. Nambi Aroorar also sang in Hindola raaga as:

"Pittha! Piraishoodi! Perumane! Arulala!
Yetthal Maravade Ninaikkinren Manattunnai"

His songs are called as Thevaarapadalgal. Even now in Tamilnadu, people worship Lord Shiva by singing these songs.

The wedding was stopped in Puttur due to Lord Shiva's intervention. The daughter of Shivacharya became an ascetic and spent her whole life in penance. Aroorar left Thiruvennainallur and reached Thirunavalur.

He went from Thirunavalur to Thirutthurayur and sang in praise of Lord Shiva. From there he went to Chidambaram and later reached a holy place called Thiruvadigai Veerattanam. This is the holy place where Thirunavukkarasar served the Lord by removing the grass

and gravel surrounding the temple and by cleaning the temple premises. He did not want to step on such a sacred place and hence stayed outside the town in a mutt. But Lord Shiva disguised himself as an old Brahmin to bless Nambi Aroorar. Then the Lord went to the mutt and slept near Sundarar in such a way that His foot touched Sundarar's head.

Realizing that somebody's feet was touching his head, Nambi Aroorar asked Him, "O great Brahmin! Why have you placed your feet on my head?" To this the old man replied "I am an old man. Unknowingly I might have put my feet on your head." Then Nambi Aroorar got up and changed the place and slept there. Again and again the old man touched his head with his feet. Then Nambi Aroorar got angry and asked him, "Why are you touching my head with your feet again and again, who are you?"

The old man then said, "Did you not recognize me?" and then disappeared. Nambi Aroorar now understood that the old man was none other than Lord Shiva himself. He felt very sad that due to his arrogance he committed this mistake.

Then Nambi Aroorar went to many holy places and sang songs in praise of Lord Shiva and finally reached the great holy place, Chidambaram.

Lord Shiva is seen in the form of Panchabhoothas—Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Sky. The Lord shines in the form of Earth with the name of "Ekambareshwara" at Kanchipuram.

At Thiruvanaikka, Lord Shiva is in the form of water as "Jambulingeshwara". Inside the sanctum water is present at all times near the Lord's feet. In this way He is seen in the form of water.

At Thiruvannamalai, the Lord is worshipped in the form of light. In the month of Kartika, on the day of full moon, a lamp is lit in one of the mountains which keeps glowing for about three to four months and could be seen shining from over a 100-mile radius.

At Kalahasti, in the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Kalahasteeshwara, two lamps keep glowing all the time. Though there is not much of air circulation inside, only one lamp wavers always and this shows the existence of the Lord in the form of air while the other glows steadily.

Chidambaram is the holy place where Lord Nataraja exhibited his cosmic dance to Pathanjali and Vyagrapadha saints. Here the Lord is worshipped in the form of Akasha.

Nataraja, the dancing form of Lord Shiva shines in this holy place where great people like Thirugnanasambandhar, Thirunavukkarasar, Manikkavachagar and other great saints have sung and praised the Lord.

Nambi Aroorar went to Chidambaram to seek the blessings of Lord Nataraja. With folded hands on his head, merging the four Antahkarnas (inner mental tools)—Manas, Buddhi, Chitta, and Ahankara into one, winning over Rajasa (dynamism) and Tamasa (ignorance) and with Saatvik nature (serene), he saw the Lord in the dancing pose with his left leg raised up. His excitement knew no bounds. He started crying in ecstasy. "Gangadhara! Shashishekhara! Jatadhari! I am very gratified to see Your dance. My life has been worthwhile." he said. He then worshipped the Lord and sang in praise of the Him. Lord Shiva was pleased and asked him to go to Thiruvarur to have his darshan. Hearing this Nambi Aroorar was overjoyed. He then worshipped the Lord and came out of the temple.

On the way to Thiruvaroor, he went to Sheergali where Thirugnanasambandhar was born. Due to floods the whole world was drowned in water. Only this town was sailing like a boat on water and so it was also called “Dhonipura”. As this is the place where the Lord had blessed Thirugnanasambandhar, Nambi Aroorar felt that it would be like committing a sin to step on such a holy place and so he stayed outside the town itself and he bowed down to the Lord from there. Shiva with Devi Parvathi gave him darshan and appeared on the holy bull. Nambi Aroorar was overjoyed and he sang and praised the Lord.

Later, on his way he went to many holy places and then reached Thiruvaroor. Lord Thyagesha appeared in the dream of devotees of that town and said “A great person by name Nambi Aroorar who is my great devotee will come here to have my darshan. Please welcome him with love and respect.” And then the Lord disappeared. The devotees of the Lord decorated the whole place with banana trees, flowers and cleaned the streets, sprinkled perfumed water and welcomed him with great pomp. Nambi Aroorar was pleased and sang songs praising the Lord and the people. He then reached the temple. He bowed down to the Lord and sang songs in praise of the Lord.

Then Lord Thyagesha told him, “I am your friend. I forced you to become my servant in the wedding mantap. You should always be dressed in the same way that you were at the wedding mantap and live happily.” Then Aroorar said “Oh! Lord! You are the one who protected me! Oh Lord of Thiruvaroor! Ardhanarishwara! How shall I explain your kindness! You brought me here and made me your friend and blessed me. I bow down to you.”

Then the devotees named him as "Thambiran Tholar" meaning the "Lord's friend" and praised him.

At Kailasa, Nambi Aroorar had loved two of Devi Parvathi's maids, Kamalini and Anindita. Kamalini was born as a devadasi in Thiruvaroor. Devadasis accepted the Lord as their husband and served the Lord in the temple throughout their lives.

Kamalini was named as Paravaiyar by the people. She grew up as a beautiful girl. Her eyes were beautiful as that of a deer. She had a beautiful face like a moon and attracted people with her beauty. She showed great interest in singing praises of Goddess Parvathi and her life went on serving the Lord. This way she grew up into a beautiful lady.

One day, she was coming to the temple to worship the Lord with her maids. Nambi Aroorar who was on his way back from the temple after worshiping Lord Thyagesha saw her and got attracted to her. "Oh! How fortunate am I to see such a beautiful woman. She is Brahma's rare creation. My eyes are great which saw her," he thought. Even she saw him and had the same feelings as he had for her. She thought, "Who is this person. Is he Lord Shiva's son Skanda or is he Manmatha?" Then she went inside the temple.

Nambi Aroorar followed her and asked about her details from his followers. Then they gave him her name.

He thought that he would pray to the Lord to get her. He called her by her name and went inside the temple. But she had gone out of the temple through the back door and reached home. Sundarar started thinking about her and felt very sad on not finding her.

After reaching home, Paravaiyar asked the details

of him from her maids. For this, the maids answered, "He is a great devotee of the Lord and his name is Nambi Aroorar. Lord Shiva Himself forced him to become His servant and he is the Lord's friend too."

Hearing this, Paravaiyar was very happy and said, "He is Lord Tyageesha's servant and he is Lord's friend." She prayed to the Lord to help her in getting him.

Lord Shiva heard her prayers and appeared in the dream of his devotees of Tiruvaroor and asked them to perform the marriage of Nambi Aroorar and Paravaiyar. To give happiness to Nambi Aroorar, the Lord appeared in his dream and blessed him.

He appeared in Paravaiyar's dream and told her that she could get married to Nambi Aroorar very soon. The devotees, according to the Lord's wish, performed their wedding in a grand manner.

Nambi Aroorar lived with Paravaiyar happily. He worshipped and sang in praise of Lord Thyageesha who always protected him.

One day, Nambi Aroorar dressed well and had smeared his body with sandal wood paste. He wore a crown on his head and wore expensive jewels and went to the temple. Inside the temple, many devotees of Lord Shiva were standing. Without bowing down to the devotees, he went straight inside the sanctum sanctorum and started praising the Lord saying, "Shambho! Pinakin! Shashishekara! Gangadhara! Jyothiswaroopa! Bhootanatha! I bow down at Your lotus feet."

Viranminda Nayanar who saw Aroorar neglecting the devotees and going inside the temple sanctum became angry and said, "Let Nambi Aroorar who neglected the

devotees be away from us. We should also neglect him. The Lord who encourages such a devotee also need not be prayed. We do not need blessings from Him."

Nambi Aroorar heard this, and realized his mistake, and prayed to the Lord, "O Lord who does not have either beginning or end! Please forgive me. Also please make the devotees accept me." Lord Shiva appeared before him. Nambi Aroorar bowed down to the lotus feet of the Lord. Then Lord Shiva said, "Viranmindar is a great devotee of mine. Greatness of devotees is unmatchable. They worship me with great devotion and are not trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Pray to them for forgiveness and sing songs praising them with great devotion." Then Aroorar said, "Neelalohitha! Shankara! Without knowing anything about them, how can I sing? Please give me the strength to sing about them." Hearing this, Lord Shiva Himself sang the first line of the song,

"Thillaivaal Andhanar Tham
Adiyaarkkum Adiyen"

The Lord then asked him to continue the song further and then disappeared.

Then Aroorar joined the devotees and sang songs praising them and they also felt very happy. In this way he spent some time in Thiruvarur worshiping Lord Thyagesha.

A rich man in a place called Kundayur was an ardent devotee of Aroorar. Everyday he used to send rice, pulses and other groceries to Aroorar's house. Once due to famine, he could not send anything to Aroorar and felt very sad. He slept without having dinner that night. Then the Lord appeared in his dream and told

him that he would give him paddy for Aroorar and disappeared. When he got up in the morning, he saw the whole place of Kundayur filled with paddy and felt very happy. He sang in praise of Lord Shiva's kindness. He bowed down to Sundarar in his heart.

He was thinking how to send such a big quantity of paddy which was just like a mountain, to Thiruvaroor. He wanted to narrate this surprising story to Nambi Aroorar and started for Thiruvaroor. He got the news of whereabouts of Nambi Aroorar from Lord Shiva and met him on the way itself. He told Nambi Aroorar, "There was an obstruction for the service I was doing to you due to famine. So Lord Shiva blessed me with large amounts of paddy. But it is not possible for any person to transfer such huge amount of paddy." Hearing this, Sundara Murthy Nayanar along with the rich devotee reached Kundayur reminiscing Lord Shiva.

When he saw the mountains of paddy, Aroorar said that without the Lord's help, such huge quantities cannot be transferred from one place to another. Near Kundayur, he went to a place called Thirukkolili and there he prayed to the Lord. Then he heard a voice from the sky saying that the mountains of paddy will be transferred to Paravaiyar's house as well as to the people of Thiruvarur.

The same night the Shivaganas helped the paddy to be transferred from Kundayur to Paravaiyar's house as well as filled the whole of Thiruvarur with the grains.

In the morning, when Paravaiyar got up, she was very happy to see the mountain of paddy in front of the house as well as in Thiruvaroor. Then she made an announcement to the people that they could take the

paddy kept in front of their houses. The people filled up their houses with grains and bowed down to Sundarar.

When Sundara Murthy Nayanar was staying in Thiruvaroor, one more devotee of the Lord by name Kotpuliyar, came and met him. He requested him to visit his place called Thirunattiyattan Kudi. Nambi Aroorar also started to that place and on the way he visited other temples and sang songs praising the Lord. Kotpuliyar, the commander of the king's army, took him to his house. He made Sundarar to sit on the golden throne and washed his lotus feet with scented water and sprinkled that water on his head and on his wife's and children' head and cleaned the whole house with it. He worshipped Sundarar with sandalwood paste and with a variety of flowers with great devotion. Then they served him a grand feast. He then asked his daughters, Singadiyar and Vanappagayar to bow down to him and take his blessings. He told Sundarar, "These are my two daughters. Please accept them. They are at your service". Sundarar saw them and said that they are like his own daughters and blessed them. Then he sang in praise of Lord Shiva of Thirnattiyattam Kudi and reached Thiruvaroor.

The day of Uttarashada star in the month of Phalguna is a very sacred day for Lord Shiva. Paravaiyar needed money for serving the people who came to have darshan of the Lord. Nambi Aroorar came to know about this. He went to a holy place called Thiruppugalur and praised the Lord singing songs and prayed for money. But he could not get help immediately. He felt sad. He took the brick that was nearby and slept there with the brick as his pillow. When he got up in the morning, the bricks that were there had turned into gold. He was overjoyed and sang songs praising the kindness of the Lord. The

devotees picked up the golden bricks and followed Aroorar. He took them and gave it to Paravaiyar and went to the temple to worship the Lord and later reached home.

After some time, as he went on a pilgrimage, Lord Shiva of a place called Thirumalapadi appeared in his dream and asked him why he did not visit this temple. Immediately he went and had the darshan of Sri Viroopaksha. He praised and sang,

"Ponnar Meniyane....
Anne Unnai Allaal Ini Yaarai Ninaikkene"

He stayed there for some days and reached a place called "Thiruvanaikka". When the Chola king of Uraiyur was taking bath in river Cauvery, his pearl necklace fell inside the water and he lost it. The king said, "Oh Lord, you take it." Then, when the temple priest went to the river to get water for the Lord's abhisheka, the necklace came inside the pot and when the priest poured water from the pot on the Lord it reached the Lord. Sundarar has described this incident in his song very beautifully.

Later, continuing his pilgrimage, he reached Vriddhachala. He hinted to the Lord that he was in need of money. The Lord granted him 12,000 gold coins. Aroorar requested the Lord, "Oh Lord, make this money reach the people of Thiruvaroor and surprise them." Then the Lord blessed him as ashareeravani (words heard from above the sky) and said, "Oh Aroora, drop these coins in Manimukta river and take it back to the Thiruvaroor temple pond."

Hearing this, Aroorar felt happy and dropped the coins in the river and started for Chidambaram. He reached Chidambaram, where the Lord dances the Ananda

Thandavam and sang and praised the Lord. The brahmins of Chidambaram worshipped and praised Nambi Aroorar.

Then he visited many holy places on his way and finally reached Thiruvaroor. After few days he told Paravaiyar, "Dear wife, I had thrown the golden coins given by the Lord in the Manimukta river in Vriddhachala. As per Lord's wishes, now let us go and collect it in the temple's Kamalalaya lake." Hearing this, she laughed at his words and wondered if it was possible. In the temple, they worshipped the Lord and both of them reached the banks of the lake. He searched for the coins in the lake. How much ever he searched he could not find the coins. Seeing his plight Paravaiyaar laughed at him. Vanthondar was sad and asked the Lord, "Oh Lord, You had instructed me to throw the coins in the river and to collect it in the lake. So I threw the coins in the river. Now is it right for You to make Paravaiyar laugh at me? I have become the laughing stock of the people." Immediately, 12,000 coins came to be seen in the lake. But the purity of gold had reduced. Seeing this Sundarar sang in praise of the Lord and the gold became pure. He took the golden coins and went home.

His thirst for visiting holy places of Lord Shiva did not reduce. He again started on another pilgrimage with the devotees. Praising the Lord he continued his journey. He felt hungry and thirsty. Parameshwara appeared in the form of a Brahmin holding food and water for him in a choultry (charitable rest house). Aroorar sat next to the Brahmin and chanted "Shivaya namah, Shivaya namah". The Brahmin requested him to have food and water and take some rest. As Aroorar started sharing the food with all the other devotees, the quantity of food slowly increased and was enough for all of them. After

drinking the cold water they felt satisfied and slept for a while and took rest. As they slept, the Lord disappeared and reached Kailasa. When they woke up, they could not see either the choultry or the Brahmin. Then they realized that the Lord Himself had appeared as a Brahmin and gave food and water. Nambi Aroorar felt very happy and sang in praise of the Lord.

Later visiting many holy places, they reached a place called 'Thirukkacchur'. The cook who was supposed to cook food for Nambi Aroorar had not come. Lord Shiva who saw Arooorar being hungry appeared as a Brahmin and said, "Please be seated here. I shall go to 7 or 8 houses, beg and bring food for you." The Lord begged for food in many houses and brought food for Nambi Aroorar and his devotees. The Lord then disappeared when Nambi Aroorar was having food.

"Oh my Lord! Kindness personified! You brought food for me in this hot sun without bothering about the trouble your lotus feet experienced while stepping on stones and thorns," he cried and sang songs praising Lord Shiva.

Later Aroorar reached Kanchipuram. There, he bowed down to Ekambareshwara and went to Kalahasti, where the Lord Kalahastishwara was worshipped by Kannappa Nayanar. Bowing down to Lord Kalahastishwara and reminiscing the Lord at Srishaila, Sri Kedara and other holy places he reached Thiruvotriyur. The devotees of Thiruvotriyur welcomed him with great enthusiasm. Aroorar stayed there for a while.

In a place called Gyayiru, there lived a peasant called Gyayirukilar. The girl by name Anindita whom Sundarar had loved at Kailasa, was born as his daughter.

Her father named the child as Sangiliyar. She grew up to become a beautiful and well-mannered child. She was a great devotee of Lord Shiva by birth. Her mother requested her husband to search for a proper groom for their daughter. When she heard about this, Sangiliyar became very sad. She wanted to marry a pious devotee of Lord Shiva. Thinking what would happen to her, she got frightened and fell unconscious. When the parents asked her the reason, she told them that she wanted to marry only a devotee of Lord Shiva and none other than him. She told them that she wanted to go to Thiruvotriyur and worship the Lord. Hearing this her parents were surprised and frightened at the same time, but they did not show it.

One of the relatives sent a marriage proposal without knowing the details. But her parents sent them back with some excuse, without telling the truth. By the time they had reached their home, the boy died mysteriously. Sangiliyar's father understood the message given by the Lord and decided to agree to his daughter's proposal.

"Our daughter is a part of God. We shall take her to Thiruvotriyur to worship the Lord," the parents thought and took her to Thiruvotriyur. They built a Kanyagriha with the permission of the elders of Thiruvotriyur, where she could do meditation and worship the Lord without hindrance. They made all the necessary arrangements for her to stay.

As she made garlands in her previous birth at Kailasa, she was interested in making garlands and worshipped the Lord with flowers. She collected flowers of different colours and fragrances and made garlands. Then she offered them to the Lord.

By God's grace, the time had come for Nambi Aroorar to marry Sangiliyar. Hence Nambi Aroorar came there to worship the Lord. He entered the sanctum sanctorum and worshipped the Lord and when returning back he saw Sangiliyar giving the garlands that she had made to her friend and then disappear like a lightening. When Aroorar asked the devotee next to him who she was, he said, "She is Sangiliyar. She makes garlands for Lord Shiva." Then he understood that she is the second woman he has to marry. He prayed to the Lord, "Oh Lord! You have to save my life by marrying her to me." The Lord blessed him and said, "Sundara! Do not worry. I shall get you to marry her."

The Lord appeared in the dream of Sangiliyar in kanyagriha. She bowed down to the Lord. He told her, "Sundarar, my devotee who was saved by me in Thiruvennainallur wants to marry you. You accept to marry him and be happy." Again, Sangiliyar bowed down to the Lord and agreed and told that he should only live in Thiruvotriyur. For this the Lord told that Nambi Aroorar would promise her that he would never leave her and then disappeared. Later, Lord Shiva told Nambi Aroorar to promise that he would not go anywhere and leave Thiruvotriyur. Nambi Aroorar said that he needed His blessings to make that promise. "If I make the promise that I shall not leave Sangiliyar, then I shall lose the opportunity of visiting Your temples. I will also be losing the opportunity of singing and worshiping You. Hence You please come and sit under the holy tree when I make the promise," he requested the Lord. The Lord accepted this and Sundarar felt very happy. He said that nothing is impossible to achieve when the Lord's blessings are with him.

Then Shiva appeared in the dream of Sangiliyar and told her, "Nambi Aroorar will make a promise to you. But if he tries to make the promise in front of Garbhagriha do not accept it. When you are taking the word of promise from Nambi Aroorar, you take it under the holy tree only." He then disappeared. Sangiliyar got up and with tears of joy bowed to Lord Shiva. She told her friends that the Lord Himself had come and blessed her twice in her dream. Hearing this they were surprised and felt very happy.

The next day morning, Sangiliyaar went to the temple along with her maids to offer garlands to the Lord. Nambi Aroorar was waiting for her there. He told her everything about the dream and his desire to marry her. She felt very shy and tried to walk away. Nambi Aroorar followed her and said, "I am ready to promise you. So please come to Lord Shiva's temple." Sangiliyar's attendants told Sundarar, "Oh great man! It is not right to go to the temple for such a small thing. So please make your promise under the holy tree itself." Sundarar felt that if he does not accept to this they may feel bad and decided to accept it.

Then everyone went near the holy tree. Nambi Aroorar went around the tree three times and took an oath that he would never leave Thiruvotriyur in future. When Sangiliyaar heard this, she felt very bad that she was the cause for all this to happen as Nambi Aroorar was very fond of visiting Shiva temples. After taking the oath, Sundarar went inside the Sanctorum and chanted Panchakshara and came outside.

After Nambi Aroorar left, Sangiliyar made the garlands, offered them to the Lord and went back home.

The Lord appeared in the dream of the devotees of Thiruvotriyur and told them to perform the marriage of Nambi Aroorar and Sangiliyar. People were very excited and did as told by the Lord.

Leading a happy family life with Sangiliyar, who appeared like a Mahalakshmi, he forgot Lord Shiva. Spring started. Then he remembered the Vasanthothsava festival which is celebrated every year this season in the temple of Thyagesha at Thiruvaroor. He even remembered the dance performed by Paravaiyar every year as a service to the Lord. Immediately he realized his mistake and felt sad that he had forgotten the Lord completely. He sang songs in praise of Lord Thyagesha.

Vanthondar wished to visit Lord Thyagesha. He prostrated to the Lord and left Thiruvotriyur and crossed the border of the town. As he had broken the oath taken by him he became blind and fell down unconscious. He was grief stricken and worshipped the Lord and said, "Oh Lord Shiva! Forgive my mistake. I wished to see You and hence I made this mistake. Please forgive me." He then travelled towards Thiruvaroor.

He reached a place called Thiruvenpakkam with his followers. He prayed to the Lord there. The Lord granted him a stick and asked him to proceed. He then reached Kanchipuram where the idol of Goddess Kamakshi is present. He worshipped Lord Ekambareshwara and said, "Oh my Lord! Ekambareshwara! Neelakanta! Forgive my mistake and bless me the sight to see You." The Lord blessed him sight of his left eye. Sundarar was very happy. He sang songs in praise of the God and stayed there for a while.

Then, he visited many other places and finally

reached a place called Thiruthuruthi. He prayed to the Lord, "Oh Parameshwara! Please cure my disease." Then the Lord blessed him saying that if he takes bath in the sacred lake of the temple his disease will be cured. Sundarar took bath in the lake and got rid of his disease. Seeing this the people were surprised. He thanked the Lord by singing in praise of Him and later went to Thiruvaroor.

He saw the beauty of this place with his left eye. He reached the temple and worshipped the Lord, "Oh Lord Shiva! Kindness personified! Shashishekara! Umakantha! Please bless me the sight of my right eye." The Lord blessed him with eyesight.

Here, at Thiruvarur, Paravaiyar felt very lonely and was suffering after Nambi Aroorar left the place. After some days, she came to know about his marriage to Sangiliyar and was shattered with anger and grief.

At Thiruvaroor, Nambi Aroorar stayed in the temple itself. He sent word with some of his followers to Paravaiyar. She became so angry and she sent them back. Again Vanthondar sent some learned people as ambassadors. They said, "It is not right for a great person like you to reject your husband. So please accept him." Paravaiyar told them that she would kill herself if they force her. They returned and told the same to Nambi Aroorar.

He became very sad hearing Paravaiyar's words. He was awake all night sitting in the temple. He could hear the temple bells after the midnight pooja. Nambi Aroorar who was Lord Shiva's friend requested the Lord, "Oh Lord! Please go to Paravaiyar's house this midnight and bring her anger down. Otherwise I will die." The

Lord appeared in front of Sundarar who was his close friend.

The Lord asked him the reason for his grief. He told the Lord, "I married Sangiliyar because of Your blessings. Paravaiyar has come to know about this. She told that she has decided to kill herself if I try to meet her. Oh Lord! You are everything to me. You are my friend, my mother, and my God. So please go and reduce her anger and unite me with her." Shiva agreed to go as his ambassador and went to Paravaiyar.

Shiva at midnight went to Paravaiyar's house in disguise as a priest who worships Lord Shiva. He knocked at her door and asked her to open the door. She was awake as she was thinking of Aroorar and was surprised to see the priest in the middle of the night. She asked him the reason for his arrival at that late hour when the whole world was sleeping. The priest said, "If you agree to what I tell, I shall tell you." Hearing this Paravaiyar said, "You please tell me what it is and if it is acceptable then I shall accept it." "Oh great woman! Nambi Aroorar should come here and you should agree to this," He said. Hearing this, she got angry and said, "He forgot me and married Sangiliyar at Thiruvotriyur. Does he have the courage to come here? Is it right for you to come and console a woman at this time in the night? Nambi Aroorar should not come here. Please leave this place immediately."

Smiling to Himself, Lord Shiva went back to Nambi Aroorar to see his grief stricken face without showing His true form to Paravaiyar. He told him that she did not agree for his proposal.

Aroorar was grief stricken. "Oh Lord, You drank the

poison to protect the devas. You burnt down three cities. You kicked Yama to protect Markandeya. You have to unite Paravaiyar with me or I shall die," he said and bowed down to the Lord. "I shall go again to her and unite you both. Please stop feeling sad," Lord Shiva said and started again. There, Paravaiyar came to know that the priest who had visited her was the Lord Himself by the Lord's gestures. She was feeling very bad that she talked to the Lord very curtly and started crying, "The Lord Himself has come for His friend, Nambi Aroorar. I did not realize this and I have become a sinner". She was repenting for her act and stood waiting near the door.

At that moment Lord Shiva went to Paravaiyar's house in His real form along with Devas, Rishis, and His attendants. Seeing Lord Shiva, Paravaiyar became very happy and bowed down with great devotion. Lord Shiva said, "Paravai! My great friend, Nambi Aroorar had requested me. So I have come here again. Please accept him."

"You have come to my house in the disguise of a priest once and again now in Your real form because of my good deeds in my previous birth,. Please forgive my mistake. You have walked throughout the night from here to there and back, hurting Your lotus feet for Your friend. I accept Your request." Hearing her words Lord Shiva praised her and went back to Aroorar and told him about it. Then Aroorar started towards Paravaiyar's house with all his devotees. Devas showered flowers. His followers took flowers, sandal wood paste, jewels, expensive clothes and started walking towards Paravaiyar's house and Sundarar followed them.

Paravaiyar decorated her house with ghee lamps and

garlands of different scented flowers. She also decorated herself and stood at the door to welcome Nambi Aroorar. She saw Sundarar and was filled with love and devotion. She then bowed down to him. He held her creeper-like right hand and went inside. Both of them praised the kindness of the Lord and bowed down to Him for His blessings.

Vanthondar lived in Thiruvaroor singing and worshiping Lord Thyagesha everyday.

A great man by name Eyarkon Kalikkama Nayanar living in a place called Thirupperumangalam came to know that Sundarar had sent Lord Shiva as his messenger to unite with his wife, Paravaiyar. He became angry that a man who had sent the Lord Himself as a messenger for the sake of getting a woman is not a great devotee of the Lord. Aroorar, who came to know about this, went and prayed to the Lord. Lord Shiva cursed Kalikkamar with severe stomach ache and told him that this disease can be cured only by Sundarar. Hearing this, Kalikkamar said, "I do not want this disease to be cured by Vanthondar. I shall die rather than taking any help from him." He then took out his knife and pierced it through his stomach and died. Sundarar came to know about this and went there to kill himself with the same knife. At that moment, by God's grace Kalikkamar came back to life. He embraced Sundarar with joy.

The Chera king, Kalatritrarivar Nayanar had great devotion in Sundara Nayanar. One day Sundarar remembered him. Sundarar started to Malai naadu to visit the Chera king. On the way he reached a place called Avinashi after visiting many holy places. He saw two big houses in the Brahmin street. In one of the

houses, auspicious sounds of instruments were heard and in the other crying sounds were heard. He enquired about this with the Brahmins present there. The Brahmins replied, "Two boys, aged 5 years one from both the houses, went to a Pushkarini to take bath and a crocodile swallowed one of them. People are crying in their house who have lost their son. And in the other house, thread ceremony is going on for the boy."

The parents who had lost their son forgot about their grief and bowed down to Sundarar. Nambi Aroorar asked them with love if they were the parents of the the lost child. To this the couple said, "This happened two years back. We wished to serve you since long time. Now we are fortunate to bow down to your lotus feet." Seeing their devotion, he decided to bless them. Then he asked them about the place where their son had gone for bath and they all reached that place. There he prayed to the Lord. A crocodile came to the banks of the lake and threw out a 7-year-old boy from its mouth and went back inside the water. The boy's mother ran and hugged the child. The couple and their son bowed down to the feet of Aroorar with great devotion. Seeing this, the Devas showered flowers. Sundarar took the boy to the temple and bowed down to the Lord. He performed the thread ceremony for the boy and the parents were happy to see this. He then started from there and reached Malai naadu. The Chera king gave plenty of gold coins and ornaments and blessed the messengers who gave him the news of Nambi Aroorar's arrival. The Chera king became very happy and shouted in joy, "My protector has come! The chief of Thiruvaroor has come! My Lord has come! The great soul who has incarnated for the welfare of the country has come!" He

then gave instructions to proclaim about this news to the people.

The Chera King welcomed Vanthondar at the outskirts of the city. The city was decorated with flowers and Poornakumbha (a pot filled with water with fresh mango leaves and a coconut placed on top). Sundarar was respected as a king. He was taken on a procession in the main streets of the city and then went to the palace.

The Chera king made Vanthondar to sit on his throne. He washed Sundarar's feet and was overjoyed. He offered gold coins and ornaments to his servants. They visited all the Shiva temples near the capital city of Kodungalur. After staying there for sometime, they reached a place called Mahodha.

The Cheraman Nayanar, a great devotee of Shiva worshipped Lord Shiva everyday. Shiva admired his devotion and danced. Cheraman could hear the clinking sound of the Lord's anklets while He danced.

One day, the Chera king was taking bath. Sundarar's lifespan on earth had come to an end. Then Sundarar reached a temple called "Thirvanjaikkalam" and prayed to the Lord to take him along with Him. Then Lord Shiva told the Devas, "You all go to earth and bring Sundarar on the divine elephant, Airavatha." The Devatas reached the temple with Airavatha, the four-tusked elephant. Sundarar worshipped the Lord and started meditating. Devatas made him sit on the elephant. The blowing sounds of the celestial instruments were heard. Remembering his friend, the Chera king, Sundarar sat on the Airavatha and went in the sky route. Devatas showered flowers.

When the Chera king heard this, he sat on a horse and chanted the Shiva Panchakshari mantra in the ears of his horse. The horse flew in the sky and reached the Airavatha in which Sundarar was sitting. The horse went around Sundaramurthy Nayanar three times. The king's servants were shocked to see their king flying in the sky. The moment the king disappeared the soldiers killed themselves with their sword. They reached Kailasa to welcome their king. Sundarar also reached Kailasa worshiping the Lord through the south entrance.

Sundarar climbed down from the elephant and passing through all the entrances reached the Lord along with the Cheraman king. But only he could go near the Lord. The Chera king was stopped by the Shivaganas. Lord Shiva welcomed Sundarar with great joy. Sundarar said, "Oh kindness personified! You have forgiven all my mistakes and given me Mukthi (liberation from the cycle of birth and death)." Sundarar bowed down to Him and requested that the Chera king also be allowed inside. Shiva called His Nandi Deva and asked him to bring the Chera king inside.

The king came inside and bowed down to the Lord. Lord Shiva asked him, "Why have you come when I have not invited you?" "I am Aroorar's devotee. I saw Aroorar on the Airavatha and came here. I wish to serve both, You and Aroorar. Oh Lord! I have composed about Your praises in a book called 'Thiruvula'. Please do listen to this and bless me." he requested. The Lord agreed and he sang the songs from his book. The Lord became very happy and blessed them and said, "Let your friendship always be there. Both of you be the head of all the Ganas in Kailasa. Sundarar also lived happily there serving the Lord.

Kamalini and Anindita also reached Kailasa and served Devi Parvathi.

This way Alala Sundarar became Vanthondar and then became Sundaramurthy Nayanar. He served the Lord when living on earth and then reached the holy feet of Lord Shiva.

Alala Sundararkkum Naan Adiyen

—Sundarar

2. Thillaivaalandhanar

Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of the five basic elements: air, water, fire, earth and sky. He shines in Kanchi as Ekambareshwara in the form of earth, in Thiruvanaikaval as Jambukeshwara in the form of water, in Thiruvannamalai as Arunachaleshwara in the form of fire, in Kalahasthi as Kalahasthishwara in the form of air and in Chidambaram as Chithsabeshwara in the form of sky.

Chidambaram is the place where the Lord exhibited His Ananda Thandava (dance of bliss) to Pathanjali and Vyagrapaada saints. There lived 3000 noble Brahmins who were engaged in the service of Chidambareshwara here. This place is also called as "Thillai". These noble men were engaged in doing flawlessly the six religious rites (Shatkarmas) of learning and teaching the four Vedas: the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharvana Veda, doing religious sacrifices (yagna) and making others follow it, offering (Daana) to the worthy when needed and also accepting it likewise. These men performed religious sacrifices like Aahavaniya,

Ghaarhapatya and Dhakshinagniya for the welfare of the people. They followed the four skillful methods: wisdom, duty, deportment, and austerity. They removed the sorrows of the ordinary people by Shatkarmas. These men who were worthy of Lord Nataraja's supreme grace lived with good qualities and had no vicious intention. They considered the holy ash (vibhooti) as the supreme wealth and experienced happiness by worshiping Lord Kanakasabhapathi. They worshipped the Lord's devotees as His embodiment with great zeal.

Their outlook was, "There is nothing to attain in this world other than to wish for Lord Chidambareshwara's grace." These men were incomparable. They had the good qualities such as forgiveness, honesty, non-violence, sacrifice, kindheartedness, gentleness and bashfulness and were blessed by the Lord.

Lord Shiva directed Aroorar to sing Thiruthondathogai. He gave Nambi Aroorar the first line Himself, "Thillaivaal Andhanar Tham Adiyaarkum Adiyen". Lord Shiva praised these Brahmins for their greatness. We salute to the lotus feet of these 3000 Brahman noble men born in Chidambaram, the great place on earth. They served Lord Kanakasabhapathi by thoughts, words and actions (Kaya, Vacha, Manasa), experienced Lord Nataraja's nrithya (dance), and got Thrinethra's (Lord Shiva) blessing. Next I shall narrate the history of Thiruneelakanta Nayanar.

Thillaivaal Andhanartham Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

3. Thiruneelakanta Nayanar

The place Chidambaram in Tamilnadu is also known as Thillai. Here, a child was born in a potter's family. This child grew up into a pious boy. He always wished to sing, praise and worship Lord Nataraja. He always praised Neelakantha (when the Lord drank the haalahala poison to protect the world at the time of "Amritha-manthana", Devi Parvathi held His neck. The poison stopped in the neck and from that time Lord Shiva is also called as "Neelakanta"). The boy expressed great devotion in Neelakanta and hence people called him "Thiruneelakanta Nayanar" as he chanted Tiruneela-kantam always.

Being a potter, he earned his living by making and selling pots and led a pious life worshiping Lord Shiva's devotees and having great devotion in Lord Shiva. His wife was very beautiful and they had great love for each other. Once Thiruneelakantar became a victim to lust.

One day he got seduced and visited the house of a prostitute. He spent a night with her and came back home.

Nayanar's wife who came to know about this felt very sad that her husband had been with another woman. So she did not let him touch her. One day when he tried to get near her, she said, "Please do not touch me, it's a promise on Lord Thiruneelakanta."

Being a great devotee of the Lord, Neelakanta Nayanar was surprised to see his wife promising on the Lord. From that day onwards he decided to lead a pious life and promised that he would not touch his wife or any other woman. She also served Nayanar with great devotion. He won over his physical desires by devotion to Lord Shiva.

Time passed by and they both became very old. But still their devotion to the Lord did not decrease.

One day Lord Shiva wished to test his renunciation and to show the world about their greatness. He disguised Himself as a Sivayogi (shaivite mendicant). He reached the house of Thiruneelakanta Nayanar. Wearing a loin cloth, smearing His body with holy ash and with a big smile on His face He reached Nayanar's house with a mud vessel in His hand.

Both husband and wife were very happy to receive him and asked how they could serve him so that he would be pleased. Then Lord Shiva told, "Please keep this mud vessel with you till I come back and ask for it. This is no normal vessel. It can purify anything and everything that comes into contact with it. Please keep it safely." Thiruneelakantar accepted it with great devotion and kept it safely. He then came and prostrated to the Shivayogi.

Time passed by. Lord Shiva wished to show to the world his honesty and greatness. He made the vessel disappear from his house and then came and asked for the vessel.

But Thiruneelakantar was surprised not to find the vessel at its place. He searched everywhere and asked everyone but could not find it. He felt ashamed. He came and stood in front of the Shivayogi. Shiva became very angry and shouted at him, "Oh Neelakanta! You told me that you would get my vessel within few seconds. Why is it so late then?"

Then, Thiruneelakantar begged him for forgiveness and said, "Oh great devotee of Lord Shiva! I could not find the vessel in the place where I had kept it. I will

make a new one just like that. Please accept it and forgive me." But Lord Shiva got angry and said, "I want my vessel that I had given you. I do not want to accept any other vessel even if it is made of gold."

"Oh Lord! I could not find the vessel anywhere. You do not want to accept the new vessel. Now what will I do?" Thiruneelakantar again pleaded for forgiveness.

"You stole the miraculous vessel I gave you. You are a cheat. You are lying. I will not go back from here till I get back the vessel that you stole from me." Lord Shiva said.

"I have not stolen your vessel. How can I prove this to you. Please tell," he said. "Holding your son's hand and after taking a bath, promise me that you have not stolen the vessel," the Shivayogi said. As he did not have a son, Shiva asked him to promise holding his wife's hand.

Nayanar said that he could not touch his wife since he had taken an oath not to touch her. "I can take bath in the lake and promise you," he said. Shiva got angry and said that he would go to "Thillaival Andanar" for justice.

Shivayogi and Thiruneelakantar went to Thillaivaal Andanar's assembly and narrated the whole incident there and pleaded for justice.

Thillaivaal Andanar listened to the whole thing and asked the potter his opinion about the allegation.

Nayanar answered, "I received the mud vessel given by the Shivayogi and kept it very safely. When he came and asked for it, I went and searched the whole place but could not find it. This is the truth."

"You have lost this Shivayogi's vessel and you accept it. You hold your wife's hand and take a dip in the lake and then make your promise," they said.

Nayanar thought and decided that if this is what Lord Shiva wants me to do, so be it. He went to "Thirupuleecharam" temple along with Shivayogi and his wife. He held one end of the stick and asked his wife to hold another end of the stick to take a dip in the kalyani together. Seeing this Lord Shiva said, "You have to make the promise holding your wife's hand." Without knowing what to do Thiruneelakantar told the world about everything. He said that he had promised Lord Neelakanta that he would not touch his wife and also told what had happened earlier. Then holding one end of the stick and his wife holding the other end they took a dip in the water and got up. They got up as young couple. People were surprised to see this. But the Shivayogi who was angry till then was nowhere seen. People stood there saying, "What a miracle is this."

Lord Shiva who had come as a Shivayogi now appeared on the holy bull and gave the darshan. Thiruneelakanta Nayanar and his wife bowed down to the Lord with folded hands with great devotion. The Lord blessed them and said, "Oh noble man, both of you come to my abode, Kailasa, in this form." He then disappeared.

With full devotion and renunciation, the couple reached Lord Shiva's abode, Kailasa.

Next I shall narrate the service done by a Shiva devotee named Iyarpagayar.

Thiruneelakantathu Kuyavanaarkku Adiyen

—Sundarar

4. Iyarpagai Nayanar

Anapaaya Kulothunga Chola's fame has been enhanced in the Chola kingdom. Here a city by name "Poompuhar" also known as "Kaveripoompattinam" is present where the river Cauvery meets the ocean.

A person by name Iyarpagayar lived here and he was a Vysya by caste. He led a family life in accordance with the custom. He was a rich merchant and also a very pure devotee of Lord Shiva. He served Shiva devotees with all that they wanted. Since this quality contradicted with nature, everyone called him Iyarpagai (nature-Iyarkai, contradict-pagai).

He felt that it was his duty to give whatever His devotees asked from him and led his life accordingly. Lord Shiva, at this situation wished to test his nobility and reveal his true greatness to the world. So He appeared in disguise as a Brahmin, entered the street where Vysyas lived in the town of Puhar and arrived at the house of Iyarpagayar.

Iyarpagayar who saw Lord Shiva's devotee exclaimed softly, "What a privilege! How fortunate am I! The Lord's devotee who shines like Ardhanaareeshwara has come to my house. You are the fruits of my meditation". The evil Brahmin who came said, "O Iyarpagayar! I have heard about your charitable nature. I have come here for a gift. I shall disclose it to you only if you agree to give it wholeheartedly."

"If I have anything that my Lord wishes for, I will definitely give it to my Lord's devotee. There is no doubt about it. Please tell me what you wish for. Don't doubt further whether I will give it or not" he said.

The Brahmin who heard this said, "It is the gift of your beloved wife that I have come here for."

"Noble man, it is my privilege that you have asked for something that I have. I will offer it to you with great pleasure" he said and went inside quickly. There he saw his wife dressing up her hair with flowers. She was shining like a new flower with beauty, youthfulness, brightness etc. He saw his wife who was the personification of chastity and said, "Dearest wife! I am going to offer you to the Lord's devotee who has come home". When the lady heard this even though she felt sad for a moment, got enlightened and said to her husband, "Dearest! If that is your wish today then I will definitely fulfill it. Obeying your words is my duty." She said and prostrated to her husband and stood before him.

Iyarpagayar took his wife and reached the place where the Brahmin was present. Iyarpagayar's wife bowed to the Brahmin and stood surprised. At that moment she was shining like Goddess Mahalakshmi.

Iyarpagayar offered his wife to the Lord's devotee and with the joy that he got from this deed, asked the Brahmin softly, "What else can I do for you?"

Lord Shiva who had disguised as an evil Brahmin said, "When I take this woman and go your relatives may attack me. You have to protect us from them and cooperate in escorting us till the outskirts of this town."

Iyarpagayar started thinking, "I should have done this even before the Brahmin told me." He went inside the house, wore his silk cloth, held a sword and a shield came out and bowed to the Brahmin. The Brahmin and Iyarpagayar's wife were in the front and Iyarpagayar went behind them. This news broke out everywhere in

the city. The relatives of Iyarpagayar and his wife got angry. “How unlawful is this! The man should have gone crazy to offer his wife to somebody. The men got ready to confiscate the Brahmin and felt that they should not let the Brahmin take away the lady. Everybody held the sword, trident, and other weapons and surrounded the Brahmin in all four directions. The men who saw the old Brahmin said, “Oh evil man! Do not go further. Leave this noble woman here itself and go back without any sin”. The Brahmin looked at Iyarpagayar’s wife as though he was terrified.

“O honourable man, No need to be afraid. Iyarpagayar will win all these people”, the woman said. After he heard his wife’s words, Iyarpagayar walked with ornaments on his legs tinkling to the Brahmin and said, “Do not doubt! I will kill everybody”. Again Iyarpagayar’s wife said, “Oh gentleman! Don’t doubt. Iyarpagayar will definitely win them”. Like an angry lion Iyarpagayar



roared, got ready to kill his relatives and said, “Whoever want to save their lives run away or else get ready to become visitors to the hell.” The relatives who heard this said, “What have you done? You are dishonouring

our caste. Did you not feel ashamed that your enemies would criticize you? You have offered your wife to a Brahmin. We have to live with dignity even if you don't have to. We will not let that Brahmin carry away your wife," they said.

Iyarpagayar became even angrier when he heard what they said. "I will cut your body into pieces and fling it in all directions on the earth. I will send your soul to heaven, and then I shall send this Brahmin happily," he said and attacked them like an angry serpent. The relatives who all came in groups became frightened and started scattering in all directions. He killed whoever opposed him. Heads and body parts started rolling and blood started flowing like a river.

The people ran with fear and saved their lives. After killing all the people who opposed him in this deed, he looked at the Brahmin with peace. "O Holy man, I shall come with you till you cross the forest," he said and started following them.

Iyarpagayar followed Lord Shiva, the Supreme Personified by Vedas, and his wife, the woman who was the form of chastity.

All the three of them reached the outskirts of "Thiruchchaayakaadu". Then the evil Brahmin asked Iyarpagayar to leave. He bowed to Him and said "O noble Brahmin, it is a privilege to have your blessings." He left the place without looking back.

"His devotion is flawless. He offered his wife to me and did not even look back," the Brahmin was surprised.

Suddenly he heard, "O Iyarpagayar, Great! Come back again, you brave man! Protect us." As soon as Iyarpagayar heard this, he hurried back and said, "Here

I come! Is there anybody still troubling you? I will kill them with my sword." At that instant Lord Shiva disappeared. He was surprised to see his wife standing alone.

Then Lord Shiva appeared on the holy bull in the sky. Seeing Him, Iyarpagayar fell down and bowed to him and said, "O, Supreme Lord of the universe! I am fortunate to see you. I bow to you, O Lord!"

The Lord said, "You are matchless and have shown exceptional devotion. Both you and your wife reach My Abode," He said and blessed him with salvation.

The Devas showered flowers on them. Vedas were chanted. Iyarpagayar and his wife reached His Abode. The relatives who had got killed reached the heaven. The act of offering his wife to a devotee without anybody's intervention is a contradiction to nature (nature-Iyarkai, contradict-pagai). Undeniably Iyarpagayar's devotion is incredible. Let us bow to his lotus feet.

Next I shall narrate the history of Ilayankudi Nayanar.

Illaye Ennaada Iyarpagaykkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

5. Ilaiankudimaara Nayanar

There lived a peasant named Maaran in a village called Ilaiankudi. He was getting very good income by the grace of God. He felt that serving the Lord and the devotees of Shiva was the greatest wealth. So he called the devotees to his home, washed their feet and satisfied them by serving good food.

He had taken an oath not to say 'no' to whenever a Shiva devotee wanted or asked for anything. In this way, he would serve them happily thinking that it is the service to God. He satisfied them and felt satisfied himself. Like Alakapuri's Kubera, Maaran lived in Ilaiankudi with lot of wealth and fame.

Whether he was wealthy or poor, Maaran would worship Shiva with the same devotion. Lord Shiva wished to show the world that Maaranar served Shiva's devotees the same way whether he was rich or poor. So, Shiva made Maaran's wealth decrease day by day. Maaran became very poor. Still Maaranar did not stop serving food to the devotees. He sold all the things and served the devotees. When that was not enough, he raised loans and served the devotees.

To show Maaran's service to the world, the Lord disguised Himself as a Shiva devotee and reached Maaran's house. It was a stormy night with thunderstorm and heavy rainfall. Maaranar could not get money from anyone. As he starved of hunger for many days, he could not fall asleep, so he was sitting outside late in the night. Just when he had gone inside and closed the door when Lord Shiva disguised as a Shivayogi came to his house asking him for food. Maaran asked Him to come inside and offered Him a seat. He also helped him to dry as he had got wet because of rain.

He went inside and told his wife, "Even though we do not have food to eat, we have to serve this Shiva devotee. Please tell me a way to do this." His wife replied, "What shall I cook? We do not have anything to sell. It is night and what shall we do?" Suddenly she got an idea. She said, "Please get the grains that we

had sowed in our fields today. I shall cook the rice and serve him."

Maaran rushed to the fields with a basket to get the grains. Usually farmers do not use the grains meant for sowing, for themselves. But Maaranar felt it as his duty to serve the Shivayogi and hence rushed to his field.

In that stormy night, Maaran went with great happiness to pick the grains to serve the Shiva devotee. It was pitch dark with no lights but still he reached the fields. He filled the basket with the sprouted paddy and kept the basket on his head and reached home.

He gave it to his wife who was waiting for him at the door. She cleaned the paddy with water. Then she asked him about the wood for cooking.

Quickly Maaran pulled the wooden sticks on the roof of the house. She then removed the husk and cooked the rice and then asked him what to cook to go along with rice. Then Maaran plucked the greens that had grown in their backyard and gave it to his wife.

Then she cooked a variety of dishes with it and asked him to invite the devotee for food.

Lord Shiva was pretending as though he was fast asleep. Maaran woke him up and requested him to come and have food.

At that moment, he saw a big flash of light and was surprised. Lord Shiva appeared with Parvathi on the holy bull in front of the couple. Lord Shiva said, "O noble soul, we are pleased with your devotion towards Shiva devotees. You worshipped me through them. You and your wife come and join us in Kailasa and live there forever" and disappeared.

In this way both husband and wife got salvation.

Bowing to the lotus feet of Maara Nayanar, I shall next narrate the great service done by Meipporul Nayanar.

Ilayankudi Maaran Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

6. Meipporul Nayanar

The capital of Sethu kingdom is Thirukkovalur. In this city, on the banks of the river Pinakini there lived a clan called "Maladar". These Shaivites were great devotees of Lord Shiva.

A prince was born in "Malaimaan" which was a clan of kings of the Maladar family. He grew and became a king. This king was a great conqueror and was a very honest man. He believed that worshiping Lord Shiva is the ultimate truth. It is for this reason that people called him Meipporul Nayanar.

He donated his wealth to the temples for worship and utsavas (festivals). He offered generously to Lord Shiva's devotees.

This way as Meipporul Nayanar was ruling the country, a king by name Mukthanathan had enmity with the Nayanar, and attacked the Sethu kingdom. But, he lost his chariots, elephants, horses, and soldiers and ran away.

He felt it was impossible to defeat him in battle and decided to conquer him by deceit. He disguised himself as a devotee of Shiva. He hid a knife in the middle of a book and tied it. He wore the Rudraksha (holy bead), anointed the holy ash on his forehead and

matted his hair, took the book that had the knife in it and walked towards the palace. He reached the entrance of the king's palace.

The guards permitted him with salutation thinking him as a devotee of the Lord. This evil man crossed all the entrances and reached the king's bedroom. A soldier by name "Datta" saw this disguised man and said, "The king is resting. Please do not disturb him."

Mukthanathan said, "I have come here to teach the king about important salvation principles. Don't stop me." Saying this he disobeyed him and barged inside. The king and the queen were sleeping on the bed. Even after seeing this Mukthanathan came near the bed.

The queen who woke up immediately awakened the king. Meipporul Nayanar got up from his sleep and thought that the evil man was a true Shiva devotee. He bowed down to him and said, "O! Welcome! You have made my life worthy of living! Of what service can I be for you?"

Mukthanathan said, "I have the oldest of all the books, Agama Grantha that Lord Shiva has preached to the world. I have brought the book and have come here to preach to you."

Hearing this Meipporul Nayanar said, "There is nothing more important in my life than hearing it. Please do preach me now."

Mukthanathan said, "Only both of us should be present when I read this book. Your wife should not be here." Hearing this, the king told his wife to go to her palace.

The King then gave Mukthanathan a comfortable seat and sat on the ground and said, "O Lord's devotee!

Now you can explain it to me." At that moment Mukthanathan kept the book on his lap and acted as though he was opening the book. He then pierced the king with the knife when the Nayanar bent over to bow down to him.

Even though the king was hurt he bowed to the evil man and fell down saying, "Lord Shiva's incarnation is Meipporul."

Dutta, the soldier who was thinking about the welfare of the king from the time the evil man had sneaked into the King's bedroom, came running as soon as he saw this murder. With his sword he tried to kill the man who killed the king. But the king said, "O Datta! He is a Shiva devotee. Do not harm him in any way." The blood started oozing out of his body and he fell on the ground.

Dutta made the king lie down on his lap and with sadness asked him, "O Great king! What can I do for you now?" Nayanar then told him, "Take good care of this man, who is a Shiva devotee and see that he does not get hurt by anybody on his way until he reaches a safe place."

By this time the people who had come to know about the news surrounded Mukthanathan and angrily said, "We will kill Mukthanathan who killed our king." But, Datta told them, "The king has ordered me to take him to a safe place." When the people who had surrounded him came to know that it was king's order they moved back and gave him way. Datta left Mukthanathan in a safe place where nobody would harm him and came back to the king as soon as possible.

Datta knew that the king's intention of keeping himself alive was to hear from Datta about Mukthanathan's safety. Hence he said, "O king! I have left the man who had come in the form of Lord Shiva's devotee and killed you, in a safe place."

The king who heard this, praised Dutta and said, "You have done me a great favour today which nobody else can do."

The queen, the people and the relatives surrounded the king. The king told them, "Always all of you anoint yourself with the holy ash and worship Lord Shiva's devotees. Do service to Lord Shiva, support the path of righteousness and rule the kingdom." He later worshipped Lord Kanakasabhapathi and breathed last.

At that instant Lord Shiva appeared in the form that Nayanar had been meditating to see Him since a long time. He revealed His lotus feet to him, which is unattainable even by the Devas, and bestowed upon him the privilege to do service by staying close to Him.

The king followed non-violence and saw the Lord even in a murderer who killed him by deceit. This virtue of Meipporul Nayanar is remarkable. I salute him and bow to the lotus feet of Viranminda Nayanar whose greatness will be narrated next.

Velluma! Migavalla Meypporulukku Adiyen

—Sundarar

7. Viranminda Nayanar

Parashurama worshipped Lord Parameshwara and got a parashu (axe) from the Lord. Jamadagni was Parashurama's father. He was killed by a kshatriya king named Kartaveerya. Therefore, Parashurama took an oath to ruin Karthaveerya's full lineage. He killed many kings and with their blood he offered "Pitrutarpana" to his father. To atone for his sins, he performed penance on Lord Shiva. He requested for a separate land for Brahmins and threw his axe in the sea. The place where his axe fell into the water got converted into a beautiful piece of land. This is now called as Kerala. It is also called as Cheranaadu.

In Cheranaadu, there is a place called Chengunnur. Here a great man by name Viranminda Nayanar was born in a peasant's family. He had great love and respect for Lord Shiva and his devotees. He visited all the holy places which had Shiva temples. His daily routine was first to bow down to Lord Shiva's devotees, get their blessings and then later worship Lord Shiva.

Once, Viranminda Nayanar went on a pilgrimage. After visiting many pilgrimage centres, he went and reached Tiruvaarur. He stayed there for sometime. Everyday he worshipped the deity of Thiruvaarur, Lord Thyagesha.

One day, another great devotee of Shiva, Nambi Aroorar, came to the temple. Without acknowledging the presence of other devotees of the Lord, he went straight inside the temple to worship the Lord. Viranmindar who saw this said, "Let Sundarar who did not bow down to the devotees of the Lord, stay out of our group and the

Lord who has blessed such people also stay away from us." Then the Lord said to Nambi Aroorar, "Oh Sundara! My devotees are greater than me. They have to be worshiped. You have hurt their feelings by coming inside the temple without worshiping them." So, Nambi Aroorar went outside and recited the song starting with "Thillaivaal Andanar Tham Adiyaarkkum Adiyen". The book which contains these songs is named as Thiruthondathogai. He sang these songs and bowed down to Shiva's devotees. Then, Viranminda Nayanar was pleased and blessed him.

This great man, Viranminda Nayanar who established the greatness of Lord Shiva's devotees did a lot of good work for the welfare of the world. Lord Shiva gave him the status of being the chief of the Ganas at Kailasa. The credit of making Sundarar sing the Thiruthondathogai goes to Viranmindar.

Even after Viranmindar said that let Lord Shiva not favour the people who do not worship his devotees, Lord Shiva gave darshan to Nambi Aroorar at his northside entrance. Viranmindar who came to know about this, became angry and took an oath that he would never visit Thiruvaroor. He went and lived with his wife in a place situated to the north of Thiruvaroor. He also promised that he will axe the legs of the devotees who come to his place and intend to visit Thiruvaroor. One day, Lord Thyagesha came to Viranmindar's house disguising Himself as a Shiva devotee and told that he lives in Thiruvaroor. Immediately, Viranmindar took the axe into his hand. Lord Shiva started running and Viranmindar also chased him. As both ran they reached the border of Thiruvaroor. Then Lord Shiva said, "I have come out of your place." When he came to know that

he had failed, Viranmindar cut his own legs. Then the Lord gave him darshan as told by Thiruvaroor Kshetra Purana.

Now the place where Lord Shiva gave darshan to Viranmindar is known as 'Ottu Thyagesha Mandira", the place where Viranmindar lived is called as "Aandippandal". The place where Lord Shiva escaped and told that he came out is called Vendampalai now.

Viripolil Shool Kunrayar Viranmindarukku Adiyen

—Sundarar

8. Amarneethi Nayanar

There is a city in the Chola kingdom by name Palaiyarai, which is on the banks of the river Cauvery. A Shiva devotee by name Amarneethi Nayanar lived here. He was a Vaishya by caste. He was a merchant who sold pearls, gems etc. He was a very wealthy man and engaged himself in the service of devotees of Lord Shiva. He offered food and clothes to Shiva devotees.

One day he had gone to a fair in Thirunallur with his wife and children. In this place there was a mutt (shelter for people to take rest, have food and relax) that he had built. In that mutt he had made all kinds of facilities for the people who come to the fair.

Lord Shiva (Gangadhaari) wished to show the greatness of Amarneethi Nayanar to the world. Thus He disguised as a Brahmachari (celibate) boy and reached Thirunallur with a stick in his hand, which had two of his loin clothes tied to it. Amarneethi Nayanar, who saw the radiance in the boy's face, bowed to him and said,

"Welcome to you! Until today you have not come to our mutt. Now that you have come it is my great privilege. Do come and take food!"

The Brahmachari said,"I accept your request, but after I have a holy dip in the Cauvery I shall have food. If it rains I will need a dry loincloth when I come after taking bath. Hence, out of the two clothes that I have I will give one of it to you. You have to take care of it carefully. Give it to me as soon as I come."

Amarneethi Nayanar kept the cloth safely in a different place. He then started distributing clothes to other devotees who had come. Lord Shiva who had disguised as a Brahmachari made his loincloth disappear. He came shivering soaked in rain and reached Amarneethi Nayanar's mutt. Seeing Amarneethi Nayanar coming towards Him, He said, "I have been soaked in the rain and I need to wear a dry loincloth. Please bring me the cloth that I gave you." Amarneethi Nayanar came to the place where he had kept the cloth but it was not there. Surprised, he searched everywhere for it but could not get it.

He searched for it in other places also, but could not find it. Without knowing what to do he took out one cloth that he was distributing and stood in front of the Brahmachari. He bowed to Him and said, "O Noble man! I had kept the loincloth that you gave me safely in a place but now it is not there. I could not find it anywhere. Please forgive me and accept this cloth."

Hearing these words the Brahmachari got angry and said to him, "It is not even one day since I gave you my cloth. You stole it and tell that you offer clothes to everyone. Your way of doing business is very fine."

Amarneethi Nayanar who heard this said, "O Lord! O Noble man! Please pardon me for the mistake I have committed. I am ready to give you whatever you ask for. Please accept whatever I have from silk clothes to pearls, gems etc and forgive me."

The Brahmachari said, "What can I do with your pearls and gems? I do not have another loincloth. Give me one cloth which weighs equivalent to my cloth and that will do." Hearing this Amarneethi Nayanar became happy and brought a weighing scale. On one side of the balance the Brahmachari kept His wet loincloth. Amarneethi Nayanar kept the clothes that he had got for distributing to the devotees on the other side. Nayanar's loads of clothes could not become equivalent to Brahmachari's cloth. Seeing this with surprise, Amarneethi Nayanar requested the Brahmachari to grant him permission to weigh the most expensive clothes that he had. He was given the permission to do so. Still the side that had the Brahmachari's cloth was down. Again he requested Him and brought gems and jewels and kept it. Even then the balance did not become equal. Amarneethi Nayanar requested Him and said, "If you grant me permission the three of us-I, my son, and my wife—will climb the weighing scale." Lord Shiva who had disguised as Brahmachari accepted it. Then Amarneethi Nayanar said, "If the offerings that I have done till now has been done wholeheartedly and if our devotion to Lord Shiva is pure, let this weighing machine become equal as soon as we climb the scale." They climbed the weighing scale and sat on the side where gems and jewels were kept. Since Amarneethi Nayanar's devotion and service was great, it became equal as soon as he with his wife and son sat on it. The Brahmachari appeared

as Lord Shiva on the holy bull. The Devas (celestial Gods) showered flowers. All the three of them who were sitting on the weighing scale bowed to Lord Shiva.

The weighing scale became an enchanting airplane and took the three of them to Kailasa (Lord Shiva's abode). Amarneethi Nayanar lived there happily, doing service to the Lord.

Allimen Mullaiyandhaar Amarneethikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

9. Eribaddha Nayanar

Karuvur was one of the capital cities of Chola kingdom. In this prosperous city, there is a Shiva temple called Thiruaanilai, where many devotees spent their lives serving Lord Shiva. One of the greatest devotees of them was Eribaddha Nayanar. He had kept an axe with him to protect the devotees of the Lord from any difficulty.

At the same period of Eribaddha Nayanar, there lived an old Brahmin called Shivakamiyandar who served the God with great enthusiasm. He used to collect flowers of different colours and scents in a basket and put this basket on a stick on his shoulder and sing in praise of the Lord. Then he would make garlands of different types out of these flowers and offer it to the Lord and felt happy.

One day, he was on his way to the temple with his flower basket. At the same time, the Chola King's royal elephant "Pattavardhana"was in a bout of rage and coming on the same road after its bath in the river

Amravathi. Everyone got scared and ran away. It came and snatched the basket from Shivakamiyandar and threw it away. Then the mahouts chased the elephant towards the palace.

Shivakamiyandar got angry and followed the elephant to hit it with his stick but stumbled over a stone and fell down. He felt very bad and said to the Lord, "O Lord, I am your devotee and these flowers are meant for you. The flowers are strewn all over on the ground and I, being your devotee, fell down. There is nobody to rescue me from all this."



Eribaddha Nayanar who came there at that time heard this and became very angry. He bowed down to Shivakamiyandar and asked him, "Where did the elephant which troubled you go?" Shivakamiyandar said, "The elephant which threw the basket of flowers to be offered to my Lord went this way" and showed the road.

Eribaddha Nayanar followed the way that Shivakamiyandar had indicated, with an axe in his hand. He went towards the elephant and said, "How arrogant

is this animal? Nobody can stop me including the Devas from heaven, from killing it. "Saying this, he jumped on the elephant. The arrogant and angry elephant opposed him. Without any fear, Eribaddha Nayanar took out his axe and cut the elephant's trunk. Making a roaring nose, the elephant which appeared like a mountain fell down and died. He even killed five guards who came to protect the elephant. The news reached the Chola king through his bodyguards.

On hearing this, like an angry lion the king came out of the palace to find out who had killed the elephant. The minister who understood the situation followed the king with an army of elephants, horses and chariots. The king climbed on his royal horse and reached the place where the elephant was lying dead. He saw only a Shiva devotee and thought that he could not have killed the elephant. He asked his soldiers who killed the elephant. They showed Eribaddha Nayanar, the devotee of Lord Shiva with axe had killed the elephant.

He thought that unless the animal had troubled him very badly this great devotee would not have killed the elephant. The king moved away from the army and felt happy that the elephant did not hurt this devotee when he went and stood in front of the elephant.

The king bowed down to the devotee and said, "I do not know what mistake this elephant has made. But, please bless me and let me know if killing this elephant and these soldiers is enough for the elephant's mistake.

Nayanar replied, "Oh king, the elephant snatched the basket of flowers and threw it which were collected by Shivakamiyandar to be offered to Lord Shiva. The guards who were with the elephant did not stop it from

doing. So, I got angry and killed the animal as well as the guards." Listening to this, the king became very sad and bowed down to Eribaddha Nayanar and said, "You did the right thing by killing them as they were hurting the devotee of Shiva. You should punish me as I am the king and I hold all the responsibilities for the actions of my people. So, please kill me by using my sword but not with your axe." Saying this, he gave him the sword.

Seeing the king's devotion and politeness, Nayanar thought that if he does not take the sword from his hands the king would kill himself. So, he accepted the sword from the king.

The Chola king said that he has got an opportunity to be killed by a Shiva devotee from his own sword. Hearing this Eribaddha Nayanar thought that what he did was wrong and tried to kill himself with the sword. The king who saw this held Nayanar's hand and the sword tightly.

At this moment, a voice from heaven was heard— "Oh noble men! The elephant had spoiled the flowers, by Lord Shiva's grace, to show to the world your great service and loving devotion towards the Lord. Everything happened at Lord Shiva's command". Nayanar and the king bowed down to the voice. Then the basket was seen filled with flowers and leaves. The elephant, Pattavardhana and the guards got up as though they got up from deep sleep. Devas showered flowers from heaven.

Eribaddha Nayanar requested the king to return to the palace on his elephant. Shivagamiyandar took the flower basket and went to the Aanilai temple and did the service of offering garlands to the Lord.

Eribaddha Nayanar this way continued to serve Siva bhaktas and later reached the abode of Lord Shiva. He became the chief of Shivaganas at Kailasa.

Bowing down to Eribaddha Nayanar, next I shall narrate the history of Enadhi Nayanar.

Ilaimalindha Velnambi Eribaddharkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

10. Enaadhinatha Nayanar

The Chola kings are the ones who had hoisted the flag with a tiger on it, on the snow-covered mountains. In a place called 'Yayinanur' in the Chola kingdom a Shiva devotee by name Enadhinathar of Izha caste lived here. He dedicated all his earnings to the service of the devotees who had anointed the holy ash on their foreheads.

The Izha caste people taught sword fighting to the commander-in-chief and other warriors of the Chola kingdom. The kings honoured these mentors by giving them gold pendants worn on the foreheads, and finger rings. All the people in this city praised Enadhinathar for his good character and devotion.

But one of his relatives called 'Athishoora' was jealous of him. He was proud and felt that he was the greatest warrior and the best Guru. The number of disciples grew for Enadhinatha Nayanar who had all the good qualities like calmness, patience, doing service to Lord Shiva devotees and love for his disciples. The income started abating for Athishoora who was proud, selfish and arrogant.

Athishoora who could not tolerate Enadhinathar's prosperity yearned to kill Enadhinathar. He took his

sword and shield and proclaimed at the entrance of Enadhinathar's house, "One who wins in the warfare should have the right to teach sword fighting," He called him to fight with him.

Enadhinathar prepared to wage war and he said, "Who is roaring like a lion to fight with me?" All the disciples, warriors, and youth who had learnt sword fighting from him joined him. Athishoora who saw them coming out said, "Let us both fight along with our army, in the nearby field. One who wins this war has the right to teach sword fighting." To this Enadhinathar said, "If that is your wish then I am ready to fight with you."

The terrifying war started. Warriors with swords, bows and arrows started fighting with each other like cobras, without caring for their lives. Heads rolled and blood started flowing like a river. The soldiers killed their enemies before they got killed and then fell down on the ground. This way many soldiers from both the sides got killed. Seeing this Enadhinathar became angry. With his anklets tinkling he walked ahead of his soldiers and killed all the enemies. Athishoora who could not confront him turned his back and ran away with his army.

Athishoora became aware that he could not kill him righteously and decided to kill him by deceit.

Throughout the night he thought of a plan and then sent for Enadhinathar and told, "Let us both fight without our army and substantiate our rights."

Enadhinathar accepted this and without telling his relatives, disciples or anybody went with his sword and shield and reached the place where the evil man had told him to come.

Athishoora knew that Enadhinathar would not be troublesome to one who anoints the holy ash on his forehead. Athishoora who had never even touched the holy ash till that day, donned the holy ash on his forehead and all over his body and reached the place where he had suggested. He covered his face with the shield and got ready to fight.

Like a hungry lion that leaps to have his food Enadhinathar got ready to kill him. Athishoora immediately moved the shield with which he had covered his face. Seeing his face decorated with the holy ash Enadhinathar said, "Oh Lord! I have made a mistake. If killing me would give pleasure to this Shiva devotee then let it be so." He got ready to throw away his sword.

Thinking that if he threw his weapons away and Athishoora killed him, Athishoora would be called as the offender, he held the sword and shield acting as though he was fighting. Athishoora killed Enadhinathar with his sword and fulfilled his wish.

Seeing the love of Enadhinathar for Shiva devotees, Lord Shiva appeared before Enadhinathar and blessed him.

"You have the privilege to come and live with us," Lord Shiva told Enadhinathar and reached His abode.

Let us bow down to the lotus feet of Enadhinathar who respected the holy ash that Lord Shiva and His devotees donned. Next I shall narrate Kannappa Nayanar's service to the Lord.

Enaadhinathan Tham Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

11. Kannappa Nayanar

Potthappinaadu is a place full of hunters. It is situated in today's Andhra Pradesh. This small village belongs to Kadapa Taluk. There is a small village called Udumbur here. The hunter's children of this place play with tigers cubs and elephants. The daughters of the hunter's children play with female deer.

Nagan was the chief of hunters here. His wife was Thatthai. They were childless for a long time. They worshiped Lord Subramanya with great devotion. By His grace, Thatthai gave birth to a boy baby after a long time. The baby was very heavy and so, they named him Thinnan. The hunters of the Potthappinadu became happy with the birth of Thinnan. He played in the gardens and forests of Udumbur. When he was five years old, he caught the young ones of crocodile, wild boar, tiger, wolf and tied them to a tree. Later Thinnan became an expert in bow and arrow, sword fighting and other martial arts.

Delighted by the progress of their son, his parents performed utsava (festival) for Lord Subramanya. During this utsava, they ate meat dipped in honey. Some people mixed wood apple with honey and ate it. Various instruments were played. The hunter community was happy to see Thinnan's success.

As time passed by, Thatthai and Nagan became old. Nagan could not go for hunting. The number of animals increased in the forest. Wild boars, bison and the deer destroyed the paddy fields. The people were disturbed and came and requested Nagan for help. Nagan told them, "I have become old and weak. Please accept my

son as the king of this forest. The hunters were happy to hear this. They sent word to Devaraatti who was a very respectable elderly lady in their community. Devaratti who wearing a hat made of leaves on her head, earring made of deer horns, bead necklaces on her neck and clothes made of bark, came and stood in front of Nagan. He told her, "I have given the leadership of my community to my son, Thinnan. Please do the sacrifices to be given to the forest Goddess so that he becomes a great and successful leader." She told him that she happened to observe good omens on her way and Thinnan will become a very successful king. She took the things required for the sacrifices and went back.

Then, Thinnan who came there prostrated before his father. Seeing his son, Nagan was delighted and said, "My dear son, you should protect our people even better than me. You fight with our enemies and win the battle. Please start with our soldiers immediately for your first hunt."

Next day, Thinnan took bath with other hunters at dawn in the nearby lake and got ready to go. Wearing earrings made of beads, chains made of horns of different animals, dress made of tiger skin, a sword in his waist, anklets and a leather slipper he became ready to go for hunting.

Then, Devaratti came there and blessed him on his forehead with holy rice.

The hunters ran as though they were assistants of Yamadharmaraja Himself. The hunter dogs ran fast. They started on their hunt with great enthusiasm.

Hearing the sound of their drums and other instruments bison, deers, wild dogs, bears, elephants,

tigers and lions came out of their hideout. They killed these animals leaving female animals, pregnant animals and young ones. This was their hunting principle. They caught hold of the rest of the animals in their net.

When they were hunting, a wild boar tore their nets and escaped from there. Thinnan ran behind it. His two body guards, Naagan and Kaanan followed him. The wild boar ran a long distance inside the deep jungle and got tired and stood there. Thinnan killed it with his sword. The bodyguards saw this and praised Thinnan for his first hunt and told Thinnan that they were hungry and thirsty. So, they decided to cook the boar meat and eat. When Thinnan asked for water, one of the guards said, "There is a river called Swarnamukhi behind the mountains. The water in this river is cool and has a good taste." Thinnan asked them to carry the boar there so that they can cook it there itself.

After they walked for a certain distance, they saw the mountain range of Kaalahasti where Lord Shiva resides. He told his guard, Naaga, "This mountain range is beautiful. Let us go there." Naagan remarked that the mountains were scenic and they could go and prostrate to Kudumithevar. All the three of them went near the mountains. He said, "Naaga, as I am going nearer and nearer to the mountain my heart is becoming lighter and it is filled with devotion. Show me Kudimithevar soon." Then they reached the river. They kept the boar under a tree. Thinnan then told Kaanan, "We will climb the mountains and have the darshan of Kudumithevar and come back. In the meantime, you make fire to cook."

Thinnanar got down into the Swarnamukhi river, crossed it and reached the foothill of the moutain. He

saw the beautiful mountains from there and heard the sounds of buzzing bees in the mountains.

Even though he was born as a hunter, his heart was filled with kindness. Lord Shiva blessed him. Hence all the qualities he had as a hunter vanished.

With great devotion, he went and saw the Lord of Kalahasthi mountain, Kudimithevar and felt very happy. He was excited to see the Lord. He cried in excitement. He ran and hugged Kalahastheeshwara.

He felt bad that the Lord was living all alone in the dense forest amidst elephants, bears, lions and other animals. He saw the flowers on the Shivalinga and thought, who would have put it there. Then Naagan said, "When I had come with your father, a Brahmin came and gave bath to the Linga, offered flowers to the Lord, chanted some mantras and did Naivedya. Today also he must have only done it."

Hearing this Thinnanar felt that Lord Shiva liked this kind of worship and decided to worship Lord Shiva in the same way.

Thinnanar felt that he could not leave the Lord alone and go, but also felt that the Lord must be hungry and decided that he would go and get soft and tasty meat.

As he climbed down the mountain, crossed the river Swarnamukhi and entered the garden, Kaanan said, "As per your order I have the fire ready. We have to go back to our town, as soon as possible." Then Naagan said, "Thinnan embraced Kudumithevar in the mountain. He stayed there near the God and refused to come home."

Thinnan without listening to their words, cooked the boar in the fire. He tasted every part and selected the best part and collected it in a leaf cup to be offered to

the Lord His guards, Naagan and Kaanan watched silently.

They thought that his madness towards the Lord has increased. They felt that only his father, Nagan and Devaraatti could set him right and went back to inform him.

Thinnan did not observe that they had gone back. Thinking of the Lord, he took the meat on a leaf cup, filled his mouth with water from the stream, plucked some beautiful flowers and leaves from the forest and kept them inside his tuft. In one hand he had bow and arrow and in the other he took the leaf cup filled with meat. Thinking that the Lord must be hungry he climbed the Kaalahasthi mountain at a very fast pace.

He cleared the old flowers on the Lord with his foot, spit out the water from his mouth on the Lord to bathe the Lord, put the flowers he was carrying on his head and offered the meat to Lord Shiva and requested him to eat it. He said, "Oh Lord! I have collected the tastiest part of the meat and cooked it nicely in the fire. I have chewed it in my teeth and tasted it and brought it to you. Please accept it." Lo! The Lord accepted it.

By then it was dusk and the sun was setting in the sky. He thought that the Lord would be all alone in the midst of that jungle. So he sat there and was awake the whole night guarding the Lord.

Again in the morning he bowed down to the Lord and went on his hunt to get food for the Lord.

There was a saint by name Shivagochariyaar who used to worship Kaalahastheeshwara everyday. He climbed the hill and came to the temple in the morning. He had brought fresh water in the pot to bathe the Lord and

some fresh flowers to worship the Lord. He was shocked to see meat and bones in front of the Lord. He was very much hurt to see all this. He cleaned the sanctum of the temple. Again he went and took bath in the river and came back. He bathed the Lord, offered flowers and worshiped the Lord. He bowed down to Him and went back to his ashram.

Meanwhile, Thinnanaar killed a wild boar and a deer, and reached a shady tree at noon. He cooked the meat nicely and filled it up into a leaf cup and poured the forest honey on it. He put some scented flowers on his head, filled his mouth with water and brought it to the temple.

He worshipped the Lord in the same way and offered the meat and said, "Oh Lord! Today's meat is tastier than yesterday's meat, because today's meat consists of bear, deer, and bison's meat which is filled with forest honey. I have tasted it and brought the tastiest meat."

This way he guarded the Lord throughout the night and went hunting in the morning. Shivagochariyaar also would come in the morning, feel sad, clear the meat and worship the Lord and return. His father, Naagan who came to know of the news felt sad. He took Devaratti with him and they tried to convince Thinnanar to return with them but could not do so and they returned.

After five days of such worship, Shivagochariyaar prayed to the Lord to stop this way of worshiping and went back to his ashram.

Lord Shiva appeared in his dream and said, "Do not worry that he is a hunter. He is a great man and has great devotion. He only knows me. He clears the flowers that you have offered me with his sandals. This gives

me the happiness like when my Subramanya touches me with his feet. The water he bathes me which he carries in his mouth and spits out is holier than the Ganga. The flowers which he offers me that he has on his head is more sacred than the flowers that Brahma and Vishnu offer me. The meat he offers me after cooking and tasting it is tastier than the food Vedic Brahmins offer me. The words he speaks shows his devotion to me. You hide there and see his devotion tomorrow."

Shivagochariyaar who heard the wonderful words of Lord Shiva in his dream could not sleep. He rolled back and forth on his bed. He woke up early in the morning, took bath in the river Swarnamukhi, worshiped Kalahastheeshwara and hid there itself.

It was sixth day. As usual Thinnanar climbed the mountain with the meat, water to bathe the Lord and with flowers to be offered to the Lord. Thinnanar thought that he was late and saw bad omen on his way. "These omens show blood bath. I do not know what has happened to my Lord," he thought and reached the temple.

The Lord decided to show to Shivagochariyaar the greatness of Thinnanar. A face appeared on the Shivalinga with three eyes. One eye started to bleed. Thinnanar who saw this from far away came running. The water from his mouth poured out. The meat in his hand fell down. Thinnanar fell down. He got up and wiped the blood, but the blood did not stop oozing. "Who has done this to my Lord? Is it the hunters or the wold animals?" he thought and saw in all directions. Thinnanar was worried. He could not see anybody and did not know what to do. He embraced the Lord and cried.

He went inside the forest, decided to bring some

herbs to heal the wound. He crushed some herbs and applied it on the eye. But the bleeding did not stop. Then he remembered an old saying, 'flesh for flesh'. Immediately he took out his right eye with his sharp arrow and placed it on Kalahastheeswara's right eye. The bleeding stopped. Seeing this Thinnanar was delighted.

Kalahastheeswara wanted to show to the world the great devotion of His devotee. He made His left eye to bleed. When Thinnanar saw this he felt that now he knew the medicine for this very well. He decided to take out his left eye and place it on the Lord's left eye. Then he realised the difficulty in placing the eye in position once he took off his other eye. so he placed his foot on the Lord's bleeding left eye as a mark and raised the arrow to take out his left eye. The Lord saw his devotion and held Thinnanar's hands. "Stop Kannappa, Stop!" the Lord said and blessed him.

Shivagochariyar saw Kannapar take out his eye and was surprised by his devotion. Chanting of Vedas were heard. Brahma and other Devatas showered flowers. From that day onwards Thinnanar came to be called as 'Kannapar'. Lord Shiva gave darshan to Kannappan. The Lord held Kannappa's hands who tried to take out his left eye and said, "Oh Kannappa, Your are uncomparable. You always stay on my right side" and blessed him. (Kan-eye appan-placed—the one who replaced his eye for Lord's eye.)

Bowing to Kannappa Nayanar, I shall next narrate the history of Kunguliakkalaya Nayanar.

Kalaimalindha Sheernambi Kannapparkku Adiyen

—Sundarar

12. Kungiliakkalaya Nayanar

Thirukkadavur was a place in the Chola kingdom where the temple of Kaalakala who had kicked Kaala is present. The richness of this place is inexpressible. Here one can see the bees buzzing and enjoying the nectar of lotus flowers, which swing due to the roving of the fishes in the pond. The smoke that comes out of the religious sacrifices (Yaga) makes the whole place aromatic.

A Shiva devotee by name Kungiliakkalaya Nayanar who was a Brahmin noble man, lived in this wonderful place, Thirukkadavur. He did service to Amrutha Ghateshwara (Lord Shiva who stepped on Yama for the sake of Markandeya and helped him) by burning Kungiliya smoke (incense smoke). Because of this people called him as Kungiliakkalaya Nayanar.

The Lord who wished to test his devotion made him poor. Even though he became poor he did service to God and did not stop it. As the poverty augmented he started selling his land. He got into a situation where he did not have food even for one meal. Kungiliakkalaya Nayanar and his family lived without eating anything for two days.

Seeing this situation his wife gave her mangalya (ornament worn by a wife as a sign of marriage) and asked him to sell it and buy the grains. Nayanar went to the shop to sell it.

When he was walking he saw a merchant with a bag full of sambrani (incense powder). Seeing this Nayanar asked him what he had in his bag. The merchant said that he had Kungiliya (sambrani) in it. Hearing this Nayanar became happy. He thought that he would buy

this and worship the Lord. He gave the mangalya to him and got the sambrani.

Soon he reached the Veerattana temple. He kept the sambrani bag inside the temple. With happiness he bowed to the feet of Lord Shiva forgot about everything and did the sambrani seva (service) to the Lord. That night his wife, children, and relatives waited for Nayanar, felt tired of hunger and fell asleep. By Lord Shiva's grace Kubera came to their house and showered the house with food grains, money and jewels. Lord Shiva came in Kalayanar wife's dream and hinted her that their house was filled with grains and money. Kalayanar's wife got up from sleep and came to know that the dream was true. She knew that it was Lord Shiva who has given it and prostrated to Shiva-Parvathi. In the morning she woke up and got ready to cook a feast for her husband and devotees.

Kungiliakkalaya Nayanar with his heart full of devotion chanted Om Namah Shivaya and did sambrani seva and filled the temple with the divine smell. Kaalakala, the Lord wished to tell Nayanar what He had bestowed upon him. So with disembodied voice He said, "Kalaya, You are hungry. Go home. Have a feast and be happy."

Hearing the Lord's voice, Kalaya Nayanar unable to refute God's words, prostrated to the Lord and left the temple. He reached home and saw the wealth and asked his wife where all this had come from. His wife told that they got all the wealth by Lord Shiva's blessings. He felt that the Lord had shown mercy and bestowed the wealth on him. He was surprised and bowed to the Lord again and again.

Everyday he offered sweets, vegetables, milk, ghee and curd to the devotees and also had it. He did the sambrani seva to the Lord very well every day without fail.

In a place called "Thiruppanandhaal" the Lingam of Lord Shiva was slightly bent. A girl named Thataka used to put garland to this Lingam, which was present under a palm tree. One day when she was garlanding the Lord, her upper garment started to slip. So she tried to put the garland by holding her garment. Seeing her innocence, Lord Shiva himself slanted down a little.

The king tried to straighten the Lingam with the help of his elephants and army but failed. The Chola king became sad and upset.

Kalayanar came to know of the Chola King's concern. He felt that he had to help the Chola king. He bowed to Thirukkadavur Shiva and left for Thiruppanandhaal. "I shall partake in the service of straightening the Lord's Lingam", he decided. He tied one end of the rope to the Lingam and the other end to his neck. Lord Shiva bowed down to Kalayanar's love and devotion and straightened himself. Seeing this devatas showered flowers. The elephants and the army, who had fallen down, got up and became happy. The Chola king bowed to Kalayanar and praising him said, "You have set straight the Lingam and have given me the chance to worship the Lord." The king renovated the temple and reached his headquarters. Kalayanar lived there for some time and did service to



the Lord. Later he went back to Thirukkadavur and further on did sambrani seva to the Lord.

At that time Thirugnanasambandhar swamigal and Thirunavukkarasar swamigal came to Thirukkadavur. Nayanar invited them to his house and served them. In this way, Nayanar did service to Shiva's devotees, indulged himself in doing service to the Lord and reached the feet of Lord Shiva.

He got sambrani and did service to Lord Shiva instead of getting food grains by selling his wife's mangalya. Such was his devotion to the Lord. Let us bow down to him. Next I will narrate Maanakkanchara Nayanar's service to the Lord.

Kadavoorir Kaliyan Than Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

13. Manakkanchara Nayanar

Kancharoor was a fertile land in Chola kingdom. Now, it is called as Aanatandavapuram. There were plenty of Vedic scholars in this place. A person named Maanakkanchara Nayanar born as a farmer was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. The people of this caste were senapathis (commander-in-chief) for generations with the kings. Nayanar was a very soft spoken and kindhearted man. His wealth also started increasing. Nayanar served the Shiva devotees and offered them what they needed even before they asked for it.

Nayanar did not have children for some time. So he prayed to the Lord for a child. By the grace of God, his wife gave birth to a baby girl after some time.

Nayanar celebrated this occasion happily by giving away gold, money and expensive things to Shiva devotees. She was very beautiful and grew up like a full moon.

Nayanar decided to marry his daughter to a Shiva devotee called Eyarkon Kalikkama Nayanar. Kalikkama Nayanar's relatives told him that Nayanar has accepted the wedding. Kalikkama Nayanar felt very happy about it. They decided an auspicious day for the wedding. Eyarkon Kalikkama Nayanar along with his relatives started from his town and reached a place near Kancharoor.

At this juncture, Shiva decided to show the world about Manakkanchara Nayanar's greatness. Shiva disguised as a saint. He had knotted his hair in the middle of his head on which he wore a bone beaded ornament. He wore ornaments made of bones as earrings. He had holy thread made of hair on his chest with his waist covered with loin cloth. His body was fully smeared with holy ash and he reached the house of Manakkanchara Nayanar. Nayanar was very happy to see him. He bowed down to the saint and welcomed him with great devotion.

The saint asked the Nayanar what celebration was going on in their house. The Nayanar said that his only daughter was getting married. The saint heard this and blessed him. Nayanar called her and told her to bow down to seek his blessings.

The saint saw the beautiful bride's long hair. He said that her hair is fit to make Panchavati, the thread that adorns his chest.

Nayanar who heard this took out his sword and cut his daughter's long, beautiful hair and offered it to the saint. The saint who looked like he would accept it

disappeared. Lord Shiva appeared in the sky along with Goddess Parvathi on the holy bull. Devatas showered flowers. Manakkanchara Nayanar prostrated to the Lord with great devotion.

Lord Gangadhara said to Nayanar, "I did this to show to the world your love and devotion towards me."

As Nayanar bowed down to the Lord and prayed to Him in great devotion, Lord Shiva disappeared.

At that moment, Eyarkon Kalikkama Nayanar along with his relatives reached Manakkanchara Nayanar's house. He came to know of what happened from the people who were gathered there. He felt sad that he did not get the darshan of Lord Shiva. He also started worrying that his future wife had lost her hair on this auspicious occasion. Then the Lord's words were heard, "Do not worry, Kalikkama. I shall give her hair back again and bless you. You shall marry her." Hearing this Kalikkama Nayanar stopped worrying. By God's grace, the bride's hair became normal like before. Eyarkon Kalikkama Nayanar married her and took her to his town, 'Thiurpperumangalam'.

Manakkanchara Nayanar's greatness is unmatchable who gave his only beloved daughter's hair on her wedding day to a Shiva devotee. I shall bow down to him and next I shall narrate the service rendered by Arivaattaya Nayanar.

Malaimalindha Tholvallal Maanakancharan
Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

14. Arivaattaya Nayanar

Kanamangalam is a town in the golden kingdom where river Cauvery flows. Here one can see honey flow down into the sugarcane fields, the bees buzzing and swinging on the lotus flowers near the paddy fields and the pearls falling out of the shells and shine. Arivaattayar was the head of the Velaalar group of people in this town. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. Everyday he offered cooked red rice, cooked red greens and mango pickle to the Lord in the temple.

Lord Shiva wished to show to the world his greatness that even in poverty this devotee would never fail to do his service to the Lord. The wealth that came from generations in Nayanar family slowly started reducing. Poverty started showing up. He offered the best grains (red rice) to Lord Shiva that he got as wages. He used the low quality grains that he got as wages, for himself. Since he started getting only red rice he felt he was fortunate enough and cooked all of the red rice and offered it to the Lord happily. Nayanar's wife did not feel sad even though she did not get food. She cooked the greens that she grew at their backyard and both ate the cooked greens with contentment and did service to the Lord.

God wanted to test their devotion and brought about changes to that status also. Even the greens that they ate vanished. Nayanar's wife was like Arundathi in her service to her husband, (Pathivratha Shiromani) gave water to her husband, and drank it too. But they performed the service to the Lord without any shortcomings. One day Arivaattaya Nayanar took cooked red rice, cooked red

greens, and mango pickle in a basket to offer it to the Lord walking towards the temple. His wife took Panchagavya (blend of five products—milk, curd, ghee, cow urine and cow dung obtained from the cow) in a pot and followed him. As Nayanar had not eaten anything for many days and was tired he tumbled over and fell down. His wife tried to hold Nayanar with the hand that she had covered the pot with. But the basket fell down. The red rice, red greens, and mango pickle that was in the basket fell in a crack on the earth. Seeing this he felt, "Why should I go to the temple when I am not fortunate enough to offer this rice, leaves and mango pickle to the Lord? Everything has been scattered down here. My life is worthless." He lifted the knife that he had in his hand to kill himself. At that instant, Lord Shiva, the mercy personified, spread His hand to protect the Nayanar. The hands that came out of the cleft on the ground, held Nayanar's hands tightly. At the same instant he heard the Lord eating the pickle from inside the cleft on the ground.

Nayanar stopped when the Lord held his hand that had the knife. The wound on his neck also disappeared. Reminiscing the Lord's kindness, he said, "O Chief of the world! The Protector of the three worlds! You came out of the cleft, saved my life and accepted the food. I bow down to you."



Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi appeared on the holy bull. "I am pleased with your service. Come and live in my Abode happily with your

wife." He blessed them. Nayanar and his wife reached Lord Shiva's Abode. Since he took the knife to cut his head (Arivaal–knife) he got the name as Arivaattaya Nayanar. Bowing to him, I shall next narrate the service of Aanaaya Nayanar's service to the Lord.

Enchaadha Vaattayan Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

15. Aanaya Nayanar

Melmalanadu was one of the places in the Chola kingdom. There was a place called Thirumangalam here. In this place, there was a devotee of Shiva named Aanaya Nayanar. Because he was tending cows, he was known by that name. He was not interested in doing anything other than worshiping Lord Shiva.

Aanaya Nayanar took the cows, bulls, and buffalo herds to the meadows for grazing. He took care of them by giving them soft and tasty grass and water. He was also a great flautist. The cattle listened to the melodious flute played by Aanaya Nayanar and stood still forgetting themselves.

One day, Aanaya Nayanar combed his hair, tied it on his head and decorated it with flowers. He wore a flower bunch on his ears, smeared vibhooti on his forehead and on his body. He wore a cloth made of bark on his waist and held a big stick and a flute in his hand. He proceeded towards the forest along with a group of cows.

On his way, he found a tree with very nice scented

flowers called Konnrai which Lord Shiva adored. He was so overwhelmed with its beauty and smell that he started playing devotional songs of Lord Shiva on his flute. He played the songs in all the three Shruti, Mandra, Madhyama and Thara in a variety of raagas. He played the Panchakshara melodiously. The melody of his music spread all over the stream and throughout the forest.

Listening to the music the cattle in the forest stopped grazing and stood still. The dancing peacocks and flying birds stopped following their course and listened to the melodious music. The streams in the forest were flowing without making any sound. The waves in the sea calmed to hear the music of Aanayar Nayanar. Even the celestial Gods (Vidyadharas, Kinnaras and Devas)came to hear the music played by Aanaya Nayanar.

This divine music reached Lord Shiva in Kailasa. Lord Shiva was delighted and appeared on the bull along with Parvathi and gave darshan to the Nayanar and said, "Let all my devotees be hearing your wonderful and melodious music always. Come and reach Kailasa from here."

Devatas showered flowers. The saints chanted the Vedas. Thus Aanaya Nayanar playing the flute reached Kailasa. I shall bow down to Aanaya Nayanar and next narrate the service done by Murthy Nayanar.

Alaimalinda Punalmangai Aanayarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

16. Murthy Nayanar

Pandya kingdom was an exceptional kingdom in the Dravidian states. Madurai was a popular city and the capital of this kingdom. The Kalashas of the Meenakshi Chokkalingeshwara temple, which look like they touch the clouds, augment the beauty of this place. Madurai was a place where a lot of poets were born, grew, and wrote many poems in the Dravidian language. Madurai had the greatness where even the Lord Somasundareshwara has shone as a poet.

In this fertile land Murthy Nayanar was born in a noble family in the Vysya caste. He had no interest in materialistic things, relations, land or property. He thought of Lord Shiva all the time, did service to the Lord, lived like a devotee under his Holy feet.

He decorated Lord Somasundareshwara with sandalwood paste and enjoyed doing it everyday. He felt it was his duty to decorate the Lord and never missed it any day for any reason.

During this time a king from Karnataka, in his thirst to acquire kingdoms, travelled south with an army consisting of chariots, elephants and young soldiers. He attacked the Pandya Kingdom with his army. The heads of Pandya soldiers started rolling down on to the ground. Blood started flowing like a river. Some of the warriors of the Pandya Kingdom ran in all directions. The cruel Jain king became the defender of Pandya kingdom. He made Madurai as the capital and ruled the kingdom living there itself.

Being a Jain, he hated Lord Shiva and his devotees. He found pleasure in abusing and hurting Shiva's devotees.

He was even harassing Murthy Nayanar who was decorating Lord Shiva with sandal paste. But Murthy Nayanar defied him and continued his service to the Lord.

The King, who could not bear the endurance of Murthy Nayanar for disobeying him, made sure that Murthy Nayanar did not get the sandalwood. Nayanar went into deep sorrow and prayed to Lord Shiva wishing for the King's death and yearning for a king who would be a Shiva devotee. He searched for sandalwood the whole day but could not find it.

Nayanar thinking deeply came to the temple and prayed to Lord Shiva. "As there is no Sandalwood available today I have my hand that will grind sandal for God. I shall utilize my hand as sandalwood and grind out the sandal. Saying this he took his elbow and started rubbing it on the stone. As he started rubbing blood started flowing like a stream. His skin, flesh and bones got rubbed. Fluid started oozing out from inside the bone. Lord Shiva unable to bear this said to him in disembodied voice, "I admire your devotion. Stop doing this. From tomorrow you take the place of the king who was immoral towards you, protect the world and continue the decoration of sandal paste."

Nayanar who heard this stopped and stood up with fear. His hand, which was sore, became normal by Lord's blessings. The Jain king died unexpectedly that night. His wife and relatives were grief-stricken.

As the sun rose, the ministers performed the last rites to the king. The king did not have an heir to rule the kingdom. So they worshipped the royal elephant and tied his eyes. They sent him outside and decided that whomever the elephant brings would rule the kingdom.

The royal elephant roamed around the roads of Madurai and quickly reached the main entrance of the temple. As Nayanar was thinking, "By God's grace, if I become the king I shall protect the kingdom" the elephant came and bowed to Nayanar held Nayanar with his trunk and rested him on his back. Seeing a Shiva devotee on the elephant's back the minister rejoiced. The people shouted with joy. Sounds of drums started. The royal elephant, which had Nayanar on his back, reached the place where the coronation ceremony was to take place.

The minister made Murthy Nayanar sit on the throne. It was decorated with all kinds of gems. The coronation ceremony started. At that moment Nayanar proclaimed, "I shall become king only when Jainism is forsaken completely and Shaivism is acknowledged."

Hearing this, the minister and all the noble men bowed down to him and assured him that they would respect what he said and work together to achieve it.

Again Nayanar said, "If I become the king the holy ash (vibhooti) will be considered for ritualistic bath of the Lord. Rudraksha beads, which are Shiva's devotee's identity, will be considered as the jewel and the matted hair will be the crown for me. The people and the minister praised him and said, "O king! Your requests are very great." Then the coronation of Murthy Nayanar took place amidst the chanting of Vedas and sounds of drums.

Soon Murthy Nayanar went to Somasundareshwara temple and bowed to Lord Chokkalingeshwara. Then he sat on the royal elephant passed through the main streets, went around Somasundareshwara temple and then went

back to the palace. He sat on the throne and started ruling the kingdom.

The virtuous conduct of anointing vibhooti spread throughout the kingdom. The rule of Jainism came to an end. Devotion of Lord Shiva brought prosperity in the kingdom.

Murthy Nayanar ruled the kingdom efficiently. Three great ornaments—vibhooti, Rudraksha, and matted hair protected him. Living the life of a bachelor he won the enemies. Others rulers respected him.

I bow down to Murthy Nayanar who ground his elbow to take out the sandal for Lord Shiva and later sat on the elephant and ruled the kingdom. Next I shall narrate the devotion of Muruga Nayanar.

Mummaiyaalulagaanda Murthikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

17. Muruga Nayanar

Thiruppugalur is a place in Dravidan country. The temple of this place is surrounded by water. A great devotee by name Muruga Nayanar was born in a Brahmin family here. He studied the Vedas and was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Performing pooja with different beautiful and scented flowers was his way of serving this Three-eyed Lord.

Everyday, he would get up at the break of dawn. Taking bath he would enter the garden to pluck flowers. He would collect all the flowers like Mogra, Champaka, Lilly and other scented flowers. He would even collect

different scented leaves like Maruga, Dhavana and Kamakasturi in different baskets for the worship of the Lord. He then sat in one place and made beautiful garlands. He prepared different varieties of garlands with different combinations of flowers and leaves of different colours and fragrances. He then divided these garlands for morning, afternoon, evening and night poojas in the temple. He took these garlands to Vardhamaneshwara temple to offer it to Lord Shiva. He worshiped the God by singing devotional songs in praise of the Lord.

Muruga Nayanar had got Thirugnanasambandhar as his friend. Nayanar who had participated in Sambandhar's wedding reached Lord Shiva's abode.

Nayanar entered the sacred fire with Thirugnan-sambandhar and reached the Lord's abode when Sambandhar had called upon the devotees and said, "Let us enter the sacred fire to reach Lord Shiva's feet at Kailasa."

Praising Muruga Nayanar who worshiped Lord Shiva by offering flowers and later reached the Lord's feet, I shall next narrate the service done by Rudrapashupathi Nayanar.

Muruganukkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

18. Rudrapashupathi Nayanar

Thiruthalaiyur is a holy place where river Cauvery flowed in the Chola kingdom. There lived a Brahmin noble man called Pashupathi. He wished to perform service to the Lord.

He decided that chanting the Rudra, which is the essence of the Vedas, is his service to the Lord.

The Yajur Veda is the most important of the Vedas: Rig, Yajur, and Sama. Rudra mantra is in the sixth suktha, which is in the middle of the eleventh anuvaka. This in turn is in the middle of the fourth kaanda out of the seven kaandas of the Veda. If Rudra is the eye of the Lord, the Panchaakshara in it are the eyeballs.

There are 14 Vidyas (the abode of true knowledge and wisdom)—four Vedas, six Vedangas (organs of Vedas—Shiksha, Chandas, Vyakarana, Niruktha, Jyothisha, and Kalpa) and four Upangas (Nyaya, Meemamsa, Smruthi, and Purana). Vedas are the most important of them all. Of the Vedas, Rudra is the most powerful. "Namah Shivaya" is the foremost Panchakshara mantra (five-lettered mantra) contained in Rudra. Of this, the two-lettered mantra "Shiva" is the most sacred of them all.

Rudh = Sorrow, Dravayathi = destroy is the main meaning of the word Rudra. One who always chants Rudra will be free from sorrow.

There is a big lotus pond in Thiruthalaiyur. Pashupathiyar took bath in that pond everyday. He stood in neck deep water with both hands together above his head bowing and reminiscing the Lord chanted the holy Rudra. He chanted the Rudra repeatedly and worshipped

the Lord. Even at home he chanted the Rudra mantra day and night with concentration and devotion. This gave radiance to his face. His service to Lord was chanting the Rudra mantra.

He became known with the name of Rudrapashupathi Nayanar as he chanted the Rudra mantra all the time.

Lord Parameshwara was pleased and blessed Rudrapashupathi Nayanar. He reached Kailasa and attained Salokya (attaining a place in the eternal abode of the Lord).

I bow down to Rudrapashupathi Nayanar who was blessed by Lord Shiva. Next I shall narrate Thirunaalaipovar Nayanar's service to the Lord.

Rudrapashupathikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

19. Thirunaalaippovar Nayanar

In the land of Cholas, on the banks of the river kollida, there is a small village called Aadanur. There lived tribals called Pulaiyar. Among them was a person called Nandnar. He was a great devotee of the Lord. He was a cobbler. The people who belonged to the cobbler clan made threads that are used to tie the musical instruments in Shiva temples. They stood outside the Shiva temples sang, danced and worshiped the Lord.

Once, Nayanar wished to serve Lord Shivalokanathar of Thiruppunkoor temple. With this desire, he started from Aadanur and reached Thiruppunkoor. He stood singing in front of the temple. He could not enter the temple as he belonged to the cobbler tribe. Seeing his

devotion, Lord Shiva told Nandi who was obstructing the sight to move away to one side. Nandi obeyed his Lord's command. Nandanar saw Lord Shivanathar to his heart's content. He became very happy, kept his musical instrument down and bowed down to the Lord again and again.

While returning, he saw a small brook near the temple and converted it into a beautiful pond. He again prostrated before Shiva and went back to Aadanur. Later, he used to go to nearby Shiva temples and served the Lord with great devotion. One day, he wished to visit Thillai Kanakasabhapathi. He always said that he wanted to visit Chidambaram and see the Lord. He neither ate nor slept. Each day his desire to go to Chidambaram increased. He felt very sad that even if he goes to Chidambaram he could not go inside the temple and worship the Lord. So he gave up the idea of going to Chidambaram. He also accepted it that this was also Lord's wish. But still the desire to go to Chidambaram did not fade from his heart. He counted the days saying that he would go tomorrow. So people started calling him as Thirunaalaippovar. (Nalaippovar—one who goes tomorrow.)

Time passed by. After sometime, he made up his mind and left Aadanur and reached the outskirts of Thillai. Hearing the chanting of Vedas from the temple, he did not even enter the place and stayed outside the town. Day and night he went around the town. "My own caste has become a restriction. How shall I worship Lord Nataraja who dances the Aananda Narthanam in Kanakasabhai? Will I be able to have the darshan of the Lord of Chidambaram?" he thought and in that grief, fell asleep.

Lord Shiva, who dwells in the hearts of His devotees, wished to fulfill Nandanar's desire. With a smiling face, the Lord appeared in his dream and hinted him, "You take bath in the fire to give up your caste, join the Brahmins in Thillai and reach me." The Lord appeared in the dream of each of the 3000 noble Brahmin men and asked them to keep the holy fire ready for Nandanar and cleanse him in the fire and bring him to the temple.

The Brahmins went to the temple and decided to do as the Lord had instructed.

They went to Thirunaalaippovar and said, "We have come here following the Lord's instructions. We shall make the sacred fire."

Nandanar felt very happy and bowed down to them. The Brahmins made the fire. Thirunaalaippovar who reached the sacred fire, praying to the Lord, went around the fire and then entered it. Then the body which was of his caste got destroyed. He emerged out of the fire with a sacred thread, matted hair and with viboothi on his forehead. He also wore the holy rudraksha beads. He got the form of a saint and came out of the fire chanting Lord Shiva's name.

Then he appeared like Brahma on the lotus. Sounds of celestial instruments were heard from the sky. Devatas showered flowers. Then the Brahmins in Thillai bowed down with folded hands. The devotes of Lord Shiva also bowed down to him.

Thirunaalaippovar went along with 3000 priests from the south gopura and entered the sanctum with folded hands near the Lord. After that nobody could see him. He became one with Lord Shiva. The Brahmins were surprised. The saints sang in praise of the Lord. Lord

Shiva blessed him with moksha. I shall bow down to Thirunaalaippovar who in this way sacrificed his body, entered the fire and later reached the holy feet of Lord Shiva. I shall next narrate the service done by Thirukuripputhonda Nayanar.

Shemmeyae Thirunaalaipporvarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

20. Thirukuripputhonda Nayanar

Thondai Kingdom was the place where kindness personified, Goddess Umadevi, meditated for the appearance of Lord Shiva, her consort, in accordance with Shivagama (scriptures of Shaivism) for the welfare of the people. The people of this kingdom were known for keeping up their promises. They protected the people who seek them for mercy.

Seventy Vaishyas lived in the city of Palayanur. One of them was attracted to a servant and killed his wife. She became a ghost and started troubling him even after life. This merchant always held a sword to protect him. He and his ghost wife went to the seventy Vaishyas for justice. The woman whose name was Neeli told them, "This man is my husband, but he does not protect me." But the merchant told them, "She is a ghost and she wants to kill me." When the Vaishyas asked them to stay in a private place for some time, Neeli said, "This man might kill me with his sword." The noble Vaishyas consoled this merchant and told him, "We are responsible for your life and we will sacrifice our life for you if the woman tries to kill you." Saying this they took the sword

away from him and sent him. The merchant went with Neeli inside the mantap. There she killed him and again appeared as the merchant's mother and appealed to the Vaishyas, "I am not able to find my son." The noble men saw the body of the merchant inside the mantap. To keep up their promise they dug the ground, made fire and entered it. The Thondai kingdom is a place where people sacrifice their lives to keep up the promise.

At Kailasa, while setting forth the procedure of worship (Agama) Lord Shiva told Goddess Umadevi that He only wished for worship filled with devotion. Hearing this Goddess Parvathi said, "I wish to worship you the same way." To that Lord Shiva said, "There is a wonderful place called Kanchipuram in the south. My temple is under a mango tree where you may go and worship me." Goddess Umadevi then went along with devatas (celestial being) and kinkaras (attendants) and reached Kanchipuram.

There She bowed down to Naagadevi called Paduman, "You please sit in the hollow place where I reside and take care of the temple," She requested her. Paduman agreed to this. Under the mango tree Lord Shiva's form did not appear for which she had wished and come. Then Goddess Umadevi meditated the Panchaakshara mantra with concentration. Lord Shiva appeared before her. She brought flowers from the garden and worshipped Lord Shiva cordially. Wishing to test her devotion Lord Shiva made the water in the nearby river Kampa to flood. She hugged the Lord tightly thinking that there may be danger to Him. God, who was in the form of sand, got mesmerized by the affection showed by His wife. He acknowledged the mark of Goddess Parvathi's bangles and Her breasts. When Lord Shiva asked what She wished

for She requested, "Let my worship be eternal and let the people of Kanchi follow the thirty two Dharmas (righteous path). Please bless your devotees here and forgive them of any sins other than Shivaaparadha (sins against Shiva)."

Goddess Parvathi worships Ekambareshwara and shines as Kamakshi Devi in the holy place of Kanchi. She blesses the devotees who come to her. The temple where Kamakshi did meditation is called as 'Kamakoshta'. Miraculously three blue flowers started blooming one year in a pond inside the temple.

In Kanchipuram there are places like a rabbit chasing an elephant, dead people come back alive, a place when seen will attain a state where there is no death, stream that flows to the west, a flower called 'Kumudha' which blooms in the morning, lotus which blooms in the night, a flower called 'Padhri' that blooms in the afternoon, a tamarind tree which does not bear fruits are all present inside the temple of Kamakoshta.

There is a well that hides the shadow of the person who sees it, a pond that transforms a human who tries to barge-in into a monkey, a pond that makes the monkey transform back to a human etc and other amazing things are also present there.

In this town lived a washerman who was a devotee of Lord Shiva. Knowing the intention of Lord Shiva's devotees (Kurippu- intention) he served them accordingly and hence the name 'Thirukurriputhondar'. By washing the dirt in the clothes of the devotees, he washed away his life's dirt.

Ekambareshwara wished to show his wonderful service to the world. So during winter He disguised as

a Shiva devotee wearing the holy ash with dirty, torn clothes and looking thin due to poverty reached the house of Thirukurriputhondar. Seeing Him Thirukurriputhondar bowed down and welcomed Him saying, "O great saint! Please come. Why have you become thin?

Please give me the clothes that you are wearing. I will wash it and give it back to you." Hearing this Lord Shiva said, "It is true that these clothes are very dirty but they help me from cold at night. If you can wash, dry and give it back by evening you may take it, otherwise you will be giving me more trouble." Saying this Lord Shiva gave his torn and dirty clothes to him. Nayanar washed the clothes and used steam to dry it. Suddenly it started raining heavily and there was darkness everywhere. Rainwater started pouring heavily like water pouring out of an elephant's trunk. Nayanar could not dry the clothes. He started thinking, "I could not keep up the promise and the noble man has to suffer a lot. I made a mistake. Only if I had dried it at home in the air it would have dried up." He felt sad and fell on the ground. It started raining heavily. There was no indication of stopping of the rain. Then he felt, "As I am not able to keep up the word my life is worthless. I shall die by hitting my head on the washing slab. He pounded his head on the slab. At that instant, Lord Ekambareshwara's hand appeared and held his head.

Then the rain stopped and Lord Shiva along with Goddess Umadevi appeared on the holy bull. Thirukurriputhondar Nayanar rejoiced and bowed down to the Lord. "We wished to show your devotion to all the three worlds. You may come and live with us forever," Lord Shiva said and disappeared. Nayanar attained the Lord's lotus feet.

Praising the greatness of Thirukurriputhondar, next I shall narrate the greatness of Chandeshwara Nayanar who cut and threw his own father's feet.

Thirukurriputhondartham Adiyarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

21. Chandesura Nayanar

There was a place called Cheygyalur in the Chola kingdom. Abhayakulothunga Chola laid the gold tiles for Lord Nataraja in the Chidambaram temple. There was a Brahmin by name Yagyadatta. Like there is poison and gem in a snake, he had both good and bad qualities. His wife's name was Pavithra. They had a son called Vicharasharma. The place was famous for Vedic recitations, tapas, and siva bhakthi. He was a prodigy. At the age of five, he had learnt the Vedas, and all the agamas by himself.

Vicharasharma remembered about his previous birth. When he was five years old, he had knowledge about God, due to his devotion to Lord Shiva in his previous birth.

When he was seven years old, his parents did the thread ceremony and sent him to gurukula for learning. But the teachers were surprised by his knowledge.

One day, Vicharasharma was on his way home with his Brahmin friends. The cows of were going in the same path with the cowherd boys. One cow which had just given birth to a calf attacked a shepherd boy with its horns. The cowherd who became angry hit the cow with

a stick without any sympathy. Vicharasharma who had the knowledge of the Vedas got very much upset and explained to him the greatness of cows. "The cows are reincarnation of Gods and all the holy rivers and the Goddesses reside in the cow. The Panchagavya needed for the sacred bath of Lord Shiva's feet is given by the cows. The sacred ash (vibhooti) smeared on the body of Shiva is made from cowdung. The vehicle of Lord Shiva Himself is another form of cow. The protection of cows is more sacred than worshiping Shiva Himself. You leave this job to me. In the future, I shall take care of the cows," he said.

Hearing this, the cowherd bowed down to Vicharasharma and went away. Taking the permission of the Brahmins he started the Gosamrakshana yagna, an act of protection of cows there.

Wearing a deer's skin as his cloth, Vicharasharma everyday took the cattle to graze near the banks of a pond were there was plenty of grass. If the cows did not get enough grass to eat, he would get them himself from somewhere. Then he would take the cows to the river to drink water. He showed lot of love and affection with good food and water. The cows gave plenty of milk. The Brahmins in that town were very happy to see this.

The cows felt very happy too. They went near Vicharasharma as though he was their calf and gave plenty of milk. One day, Vicharasharma who saw this wished to do abhisheka with milk to Lord Shiva. Due to his rememberance from past birth he started worshiping Shiva.

He sat under a Bilva tree, made a Linga with sand and started worshiping it. He built a Sanctum, an

enclosure (prakaras) and gopura out of sand in it. He would go near a cow and touch its udder and the cow gave plenty of milk to him happily. He collected the milk in a pot and did abhisheka to the Linga that he had created out of sand.

One stranger saw Vicharasharma worship the Lord in this way. Without understanding the importance behind it, he told the Brahmins that Vicharasharma was wasting milk and pouring it on the ground. The people of the town got enraged and called Yagnadatta, his father.

The Brahmins complained to Yagnadatta, "Your son who had said that he would protect the cows has now lied. A stranger who saw him told us that he is wasting the milk by pouring it on the ground.

Yagnadatta was frightened to hear their words and said, "My son has made this mistake. I do not know anything about this. Please forgive me. I shall see that this does not happen again. Likewise if anything happens again, I shall be responsible for it," he said and started. He felt sad and decided to find the truth. The night passed away.

The next day, he followed Vicharasharma at a distance without his knowledge. He climbed a tree at the banks of the river Manni and waited to see what happened next.

Vicharasharma took bath in the river to worship the Lord. He made a Shivalinga out of sand and built a temple. He brought fresh leaves and flowers. He kept the pots filled with milk that he had just got from the cows. Then later he brought other things needed to worship Lord Shiva.

With great devotion and concentration he started worshiping the God. He offered scented flowers to the Linga. Chanting the mantra he started bathing the Linga with milk. Parameshwara wished to show his greatness to the world.

Yagnadatta who saw this became angry and got down from the tree. He then hit the boy on his back with a stick. He then abused him. Vicharasharma who was worshiping the Lord with great concentration did not know this. His father became angry and hit him again. The boy was so much absorbed in his worship that he did not even feel the pain.

Vicharasharma's father became even more angry and knocked the milk-pot down. Vicharasharma saw his father committing a sin by interfering in the worship of the Lord. Even though he knew that it was his father who committed this sin, he took a stick lying nearby and thinking it as an axe threw it on his father's legs. Yagnadatta fell on the ground as both his legs were cut down. Vicharasharma then again became engrossed in the worship.

Lord Shiva was immensely pleased with the intensity of Vicharasharma's devotion and appeared before him, with Goddess Parvathi. Vicharasharma prostrated before the Lord who appeared along with his Ganas and saints. "You have cut down the legs of your father for my sake. Henceforth I will be your father," Lord Shiva said and embraced him.

Then the Lord said, "You be the head of all the devotees. Whatever we experience, eat, wear are also yours. We give you the status of Chandeesha." He then took the garland that was tied to His matted hair and

put it around Vicharasharma. Vicharasharma became the head of the Ganas and was called Chandeshwara Nayanar.

Even though Yagnadatta had comitted the sin of interfering in the worship of the Lord, he along with his relatives reached Lord Shiva's abode. This Brahmin boy who had cut his own father's legs for the sin he had committed, became Lord Shiva's son. Any service done by Lord Shiva's devotees is like a prayer. Let me narrate the story of Thirunavukkarasu Swamiigal.

Chandippiramaanukku Adiyen

—Sundarar

22. Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal

Thirumunaipadi was an enchanting region in the Dravida kingdom. Thiruvamur was a place in this region. A noble man by name Pugalanar who belonged to the Velaalar caste lived here with his wife Maadiniyar. As time passed by, a daughter by name Thilakavathiyar and later a son by name Marulneekiyar were born. Pugalanar brought up the children well and did all the rituals like Namakarana (naming ceremony), Annaprashna (ritual of food feeding), Karnavedhana (ear piercing ceremony) and Choula (hair removing ceremony) for them.

At this time Thilakavathiyar became 12 years old and Pugalanar wished to get her married.

Kalippagayar who belonged to the Velaalar caste had good character, right age, and belonged to a good clan. He heard about Thilakavathiyar's good conduct and decided to marry her. He sent his relatives to obtain permission from the bride's family.

Pugalanar who came to know about Kalipagayar's good qualities from his relatives and accepted the proposal for the marriage.

Kalippagayar who was working as commander-in-chief for the king got an unexpected call from the king before the wedding. Kalippagayar was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He went to defend the king in the terrifying battle that started in the northern direction. The battle went on for many days. Here Thilakavathy's father became ill and died. Maadiniyar who could not live without her husband also followed him. Thilakavathiyar and Marulneekkiyar who lost both their father and mother became orphaned and went into deep sorrow. They were consoled by their relatives and did the last rites of their parents.

Kalippagayar who acknowledged the king's commands went to the battlefield fought the battle and died there.

When Thilakavathiyar came to know that Kalippagayar met a valiant death in the battle she decided to end her life. Her brother Marulneekkiyar said, "I am living because of you. If you are going to die then I shall get ready to welcome you in heaven."

Hearing this Thilakavathiyar with kindheartedness decided to live for her brother's well being.

Since Kalippagayar attained courageous death she rejected the jewelry and lived a life of an ascetic. Her brother Marulneekkiyar grew up with Thilakavathiyar as his guardian. According to the saying 'Dharmo Rakshathi Rakshithaha' he engaged himself in charitable work.

Without knowing which religion is the best he converted blindly to Jainism, that only practices Ahimsa.

Thilakavathiyar was heart-broken on hearing this.

To make her brother a Shiva devotee she abandoned her relatives and reached a temple called 'Thiruvirattanam' at 'Thiruvadigai'. There she bowed to Lord Shiva and got engrossed in the service of the Lord. She woke up before sunrise cleaned the front of the temple and put rangoli (decorative art). She picked different kinds of flowers and leaves suitable for worship, made garlands out of it and placed it to the Lord's idol. She smeared the holy ash on her forehead and chanted the Lord's name.

She felt depressed that her brother was following Jainism. So she prayed, "O Lord! You have showed me the right direction. Please bless my brother also who has now converted into another religion" The Lord who accepted her prayers appeared in her dream that night and said, "Do not worry. Your brother was a great saint in the previous birth and had worshipped me. I shall make him suffer from severe stomach ache to teach him a lesson and later bless him."

The Lord gave him excruciating stomach pain that he could not bear. This disease made him suffer a lot. Marulneekkiyar was famous by the name Dharmasena among Jains.

Dharmasena unable to bear the pain went inside the Jain temple and treated himself according to Jain medicinal methods, but the pain only augmented. The other Jains came there and treated him with holy water and touched him with peacock feather. They tried everything but the pain did not abate. Finally they gave up thinking they cannot cure it.

Dharmasena did not know what to do further. He now remembered his relatives. He remembered his sister,

Thilakavathy. He sent his cook to tell her about his situation.The cook reached Thiruvadigai. He saw her in the temple's park, bowed to her and said, "Your brother has sent me."

Thilakavathiyar asked him, "Is he in some trouble?"

"Yes. He has severe stomach pain and everybody has tried to cure the disease but in vain. He has instructed me to ask you for a cure and come back tonight."

Hearing this she became sad and refused to go to Dharmasena where the Jains lived.

The cook went back and told Dharmasena what his sister had told.

Now Dharmasena felt sad. "What shall I do now? My disease has not been cured by Jain medicinal methods. The only way to cure my disease is to leave Jainism, go back and reach my sister," he decided. He experienced his pain reducing to some extent after his decision. He threw away the mat, the water pot (Kamandala) and the peacock feather and wore clean clothes and left for Thiruvadigai that night itself.

He reached Thilakavathiyar's mutt and fell on her feet. I am suffering from severe pain because of this disease. I cannot bear the pain anymore. He requested her to salvage him from the depth of desires and show him the right path of living.

Thilakavathiyar saw her brother at her feet. She thought about Lord Shiva's blessings and bowed to Lord Shiva. She told her brother, "You got converted to other religion. Hence you had to suffer from these problems. All this has happened by Shiva's blessings. There is none other than the Lord to protect us. You bow to the Lord

and do service to Lord Shiva." She chanted the greatest of all mantras, the Panchaakshara, to the Lord to permit him again inside the temple and took out a handful of Holy ash and gave it to him.

Marulneekkiyar felt very happy. He took the holy ash and smeared it all over his body. He then went to the temple with his sister. Due to the greatness of holy ash the darkness in his heart faded and there was brightness everywhere.

Thilakavathiyar started her service in the temple. Marulneekkiyar went around the temple and prostrated to the Lord. Suddenly he acquired strength in praising the Lord. With Lord Shiva's blessings, stream of words started flowing out of his mouth. "I shall do your service at all times. Please forgive my mistake," he sang and again bowed to the Lord. His disease got cured immediately. He got excited and tears rolled down his eyes. He fell on the ground and turned over from side to side. "Oh! God! I am grateful to this disease which made me come to your feet," he cried. At that moment a disembodied voice was heard. "You sang a great song as sweet as the honey. Hence you shall be hereafter called as Navukkarasar (Navu—tongue Arasar—king). Let it spread all over the world—King of speech, Thirunavukkarasar."

Hearing this, Thirunavukkarasar thought, 'Oh! Even though I have spent most of the time in other religion the Lord has blessed me.' Again he prostrated to Lord Shiva. The Shiva devotees next to him shouted 'Hara Hara' 'Shiva Shiva'. From that day Marulneekiyar became Thirunavukkarasar.

He gave himself to the service of the Lord by

Thrikaranas of thinking of Lord Shiva and singing the Lord's hymns. He also served the Lord in his characteristic manner of ridding the precincts of the temple of weeds and thorny shrubs on the pathway with his hoe.

"The Lord heard my prayers, gave my brother a disease to surrender at His feet. He then cured my brother's disease and made him sing songs in praise of Him. We are fortunate to have Lord Shiva's blessings," Thilakavathiyar thought and bowed to Lord Parameshwara.

In Pataliputra the Jains who heard about this felt that they could not cure the rare disease that Dharmasena had got. "He became a Shaivite and was cured of his disease. Lord Shiva blessed him and our Jain religion has descended down." All the Jain followers became sad and felt ashamed that Jainism could not do anything. They thought, "The king will also get converted to Shaivism if he comes to know about this. Our life will be ruined." So they want to justify strongly, by deceit. They thought that they would go and tell the king that Marulneekiyar abandoned Jainism by acting as though he had got a rare disease. He went back to his sister and became a Shiva devotee. This way he has dishonoured our religion.

They reached the palace and entered the court. Seeing them sad the king asked them, "What is the matter? Why are you sad?" They all said, "The head of our religion, Dharmasena, has lied that he has a rare disease and has converted to Shaivism. He has become a devotee of Lord Shiva now. This way he has dishonoured our religion and insulted you." They lied to make the king believe it. The king who had lost his thinking power asked them, "How should we punish him for the sin?"

"We have to destroy him who has tried to wipe out our religion," they roared. The king also accepted to this without thinking and ordered the minister to bring Dharmasena.

The minister obeyed the king's orders, went along with his army and reached Thiruvadigai. All the people surrounded Thirunavukkarasar and said to him, "The Pallava king has ordered us to bring you, so please start right now."

Seeing them Thirunavukkarasar said, "I am nobody's citizen. I am not afraid of Yama (the Lord of death) also. I am a devotee of Lord Shiva, the protector of the world. So I am not obeying your command and sang the song Naamarkkum kudiyallom namanai anjom.

Then the minister fell on Thirunavukkarasar's feet and requested him to go with them. He felt that if he did not go the minister would be punished and so reached the palace with them.

The Pallava king asked the Jains who were sitting there with jealousy "Tell me, what shall we do with him?" Without fearing for the sin they said, "We shall keep him inside the burning limekiln." The king in his anger agreed.

They took Thirunavukkarasar and put him inside a big burning limekiln, which was burning like fire. They then closed the door and kept a guard there.

Thirunavukkarasar prayed to Lord Shiva and imagined the burning lime kiln as a garden with nice breeze on the bank of a beautiful pond in spring surrounded by bees, and imagined it like the music from the Veena, and sang songs of protecting Lord Shiva as his duty and was happy inside the kiln.

In this way seven days passed by. The Pallava king told the Jains to open the door and see. They opened the door and were surprised to see him sitting happily like a lotus that has just bloomed. He was immersed in the ocean of happiness with Shiva. By Lord Shiva's grace he was enjoying the Amrutha (the nectar conferring immortality) sitting there happily without any worries.

They were all surprised that nothing had happened to him.

They went to the king and said, "O king! This is no surprise that he is like this. He has been protected by Jain mantras which he has learnt very well." Without feeling guilty they lied to the king and said that they have to only give him poison.

The king without analyzing blindly told them to do so.

Being Lord Vishakanta's devotee who drank the poison that came out during the churning of the ocean and protected the fourteen worlds Thirunavukkarasar smiled hearing this. He ate the food that was mixed with poison and began singing the praise of the Lord. He happily started singing that even the poison will become Amrutha if His devotees chant the Panchaakshara Mantra.

Seeing Thirunavukkarasar the Jains said, "O king, if we do not destroy him, he will destroy you and us." They thus spoiled the king's mind and made him even angrier. The king without analyzing the facts asked them what they could do to destroy him. "O king, we shall kill him by making the royal elephant walk on him," they said. The mahouts obeyed the king's orders and brought the elephant to the place where Thirunavukkarasar was

present. The Jain followers who had been wishing to see him die also went there. Shiva devotees who were remorseful for Thirunavukkarasar were also present on one side. The mahouts aggravated the elephant with their spears to kill Thirunavukkarasar.

But the elephant went around and bowed down to him. He sang in praise of Lord Shiva. He sang—"There is nothing to fear if you worship Lord Shiva. He will protect you." When the mahouts again tried to aggravate the elephant that bowed down to Thirunavukkarasar, the elephant killed the mahouts and leaped to kill the Jain followers. They felt scared and ran in all directions. The elephant killed some of the Jain followers and started to destroy the whole city. The king plunged into grief after hearing this.

The Jain followers who had escaped from the elephant came back to the palace again and fell on the king's feet and cried. The king who had lost his thinking power again became angry asked them what to do. Then the Jains said, "He has learnt the mantras of Jain religion and has made the elephant come towards us. He has disobeyed your orders. He has insulted you and we have to destroy him."

Hearing this, the merciless king asked them, "What shall we do with the Shaivite who has blemished our great Jain religion?"

The cruel Jain followers said, "We shall tie him to a rock and throw him into the ocean." The king called the soldiers and ordered, "Take Dharmasena to the shores of the ocean. Tie him to a big rock and throw him in the middle of the ocean."

The Jains followed the butchers who were asked to

do this job. Thirunavukkarasar went with them happily reminiscing Lord Shiva. They finished the job as per King's commands and returned back.

Thirunavukkarasar who had been dropped in the middle of the ocean felt that he should accept whatever the Lord would offer him and started chanting 'Namah Shivaya,' 'Namah Shivaya.' "I bow to your feet O Lord Shiva! They dropped me in the middle of the ocean but still I surrender to You. I prostrate to you O Lord!" Thus he sang in the praise of the Lord. Then the rock that he was tied to started floating and the ropes also unfastened. When the soul has been tied to the rock of ahankara (ego consciousness) with the ropes of Paapa (sins) and Punya (the good consequences of merit) and immersed in the ocean of worldly existence, the great sacred Panchaakshara will save him and reach him to the shore. It is not surprising that Thirunavukkarasar was made to sit on the rock, which floated and reached the shore because of the greatness of the Panchaakshara.

Varuna Deva (the Lord of water element) made the floating Thirunavukkarasar reach the shore at a place called Thirupadhiripuliyur. The people of that city saw



him and shouted 'Hara Hara'. The place where he reached the shore became famous as Karayeravitta Kuppam (village which possesses the shore).

Thirunavukkarasar worshipped Lord Shiva by singing songs and lived there for few days. He wished to worship the Lord Veeratana Peruman in Thiruvadigai. Hence he left Thirupadhiripuliyur. He visited all the Shiva temples on the way and reached Thiruvadigai Veeratana temple. The people with great enthusiasm welcomed Thirunavukkarasar who had been triumphant over the troubles created by the Jain followers. They offered flowers and garlands and everyone bowed down to him.

He smeared the entire body with holy ash, wore clean clothes and singing the praise of Lord Shiva reached the temple. He worshipped the Lord with his songs. He lived in that place cleaning the temple premises.

By God's grace the Pallava king who had been motivated by Jain followers to trouble Thirunavukkarasar realized the truth. He reached Thiruvadigai, bowed to Thirunavukkarasar and became a Shaivite. He broke down the Jain temples there and brought back the expensive materials to Thiruvadigai built a temple 'Gunaparaveeshwaram' and became a Shiva devotee.

Thirunavukkarasar visited many other temples, sang songs and reached a temple called Thiruthoonganaimadam where he sang, "O Lord! I hate this body that was once converted to Jain religion. If I have to live put your signet, cleanse my body and bless me." By Lord Shiva's grace a Shivabhoota (attendant of Shiva) came and made a mark of a trident and a bull on his shoulders. Appar became very happy. Later he reached Chidambaram and worshipped the Lord. He cleaned the place where the

chariot of the Lord goes around the temple by removing grass, stones, and thorns for the devotees to go around the temple. Then the Lord gave him the title 'Ariyanai' and encouraged him to sing.

One day he heard some devotees speak about Thirugnanasambandhar who lived in Seerkazhi. He wished to prostrate him and hence reached Seerkazhi along with other Shiva devotees.

Hearing Thirunavukkarasar's visit, Thirugnanasambandhar went and welcomed Thirunavukkarasar along with his devotee group. Thirunavukkarasar bowed to Thirugnanasambandhar. Lifting Thirunavukkarasar, he held Thirunavukkarasar's lotus feet and called him Appa (father). From that day onwards he was called as 'Appar'. Appar Swamigal sang in praise of the Lord after bowing to Lord Thoniyappar and Goddess Periyanayaki



in the temple. He stayed there for some days and later left for Pilgrimage. He sang songs wherever he went and pleased the Lord. At that time an invisible voice of Lord Shiva in Thirunallur said, "O devotee! Come to Thirunallur also." He then went to Thirunallur and bowed to Lord Shiva who put his lotus feet on Appar's head and blessed

him. He worshipped the Lord by cleaning the temple premises wherever he went and sang songs in praise of the Lord.

This way Thirunavukkarasar went along visiting various temples and reached Thingalur. In this place a Brahmin Shiva devotee by name Appoodhiadigal was worshiping Thirunavukkarasar as his teacher. Due to his devotion to Thirunavukkarasar he kept Thirunavukkarasar's name to his children, charity home, well, stream, trees, etc and did donation in Thirunavukkarasar's name itself. Hearing this, Thirunavukkarasar decided to go to Appoodhiadigal's house. Knowing that his teacher is coming, Appoodhiadigal got ready with his wife, children, and relatives to welcome Thirunavukkarasar. On the way he bowed to him and invited him to have a feast in his house. Appar also accepted his invitation.

Appoodhiadigal who was very devoted to Appar prepared a grand feast with variety of dishes for him. He called his son who was named as elder Thirunavukkarasar and said, "Please go and bring a good banana leaf from our backyard to serve food for Appar Swamigal." With great devotion his son went to the backyard and cut a banana leaf from the garden. Suddenly a snake came from nowhere and bit him. Even though his whole body was poisoned and was feeling giddy, without bothering much about it he thought that it was time to serve the food. So he did not tell his mother what had happened. He ran and gave the leaf to his mother, fell on the ground and died.

Appoodhiadigal and his wife hid the body thinking that Appar would not be able to have the food if he comes to know about the situation. They did not show

any feelings and invited him to have the feast. At that moment Thirunavukkarasar felt indescribable grief. By God's grace he came to know what had happened to him. He wished to help. He admired the devotion of Appoodhiadigal who had ignored his son's death. He told him to bring his son's body and keep it outside the temple. He worshipped Lord Shiva and sang a wonderful song in praise of the Lord. Immediately, the poison reduced and the boy came back to life and sat down. But Appoodhiadigal felt sad that there was an interruption in Appar having the food. Thirunavukkarasar went to Appoodhiadigal's house and had the food and blessed him. He stayed in their house for few days. Later Appar left for visiting temples in other holy places and reached the place Thirunallur where the Lord had placed his feet on his head. He lived there cleaning the places surrounding the temple with his hoe and singing songs in praise of the Lord.

One day as he wished to visit the temple at Thiruvarur, he left for Thiruvarur visiting the holy places on the way. The devotees at Thiruvarur welcomed him. He reached the temple and sang in praise of the Lord. He lived there doing service for sometime.

At Thiruvarur he felt happy seeing the Arudrothsava (the cosmic dance festival) and reached Thirupugalur after sometime. There he met Thirugnanasambandhar and together they reached a place called Thirumilalai. At that time there was famine, as it had not rained since a long time. But everyday Lord Shiva gave a gold coin at the western peeta (seat) to Thirunavukkarasar, at the eastern peeta to Thirugnanasambandhar and thus protected the people. They bought food materials out of the coin and donated food to all the devotees and protected

them. Later they went to a place called Vedaranyam. The main entrance of this holy place was closed by the Vedic power. People entered through the door next to it and worshipped the Lord. Appar sang a song to open the door, but it did not open. He sang another song when the door opened on its own. Both of them praised the Lord's grace, entered through the main entrance, worshipped the Lord and returned back. Then, Appar requested Thirugnanasambandhar to sing a song to close the door. The golden doors closed by the time he finished singing a song. It became a custom from that day onwards to open and close the main entrance door.

At this time, the minister, Kulacherayar Nayanar encouraged by Mangayarkarasiyar, the queen of the Pandya king had sent spies. Some of these spies came to Thirugnanasambandhar and bowed to him.

Thirugnanasambandhar was pleased and then questioned them if everything was fine. Then the spies told him, "O protector of the world! Will there be sorrow to anybody who reminisces you? But it is unbearable to see the Jains try to destroy Shaivism which is the ancient religion in the Pandya kingdom." To stop the evil mischief of the Jains and establish Shaivism, the queen wished that Sambandar should come to Madurai. Hearing this Thirugnanasambandhar reminisced the Lord and the Holy ash and started towards Madurai.

Thirunavukkarasar who was present there said to him, "Jains are cruel and are experts in trickery. The problems I faced with them are unexplainable. Hence please do not go." He tried to stop him. "The Pandya king's royal queen Mangayarkarasiyar and the minister Kulacherayar Nayanar are there to protect Shaivism.

I have to see them, destroy the Jains, spread the devotion of Lord Shiva as per Shaivagama (a class of scriptures dealing with the worship of Shiva) among the people. This is my duty and I shall not do anything other than this. It is my promise," he said.

Then Thirunavukkarasar said, "I shall do it myself and return back. I shall win against the trickery of Jains." But Thirugnanasambandhar persisted that he only should go. He prostrated to Lord Shiva in Vedaranyam and left for Pandya kingdom.

After he left, Thirunavukkarasar lived there for sometime singing the songs in praise of Lord Shiva of Vedaranyam and later left for Pilgrimage. At the holy place called Thirunaavaduthurai, Goddess Umadevi worships Lord Shiva in the form of cow. Here, Lord Shiva had rejoiced hearing the songs of Thirugnanasambandhar and had offered him one thousand gold coins. Thirunavukkarasar has described about this in his songs.

Later he reached a place called Thiruppalayarai. The Jains had hid the idol of Lord Shiva here. Thirunavukkarasar who wished to see this idol of Lord Shiva did Anashana vrata. The Lord appeared in the king's dream and instructed him to destroy the Jains and build a temple for Him. The king also destroyed thousands of Jains and built a temple and made Thirunavukkarasar happy.

Further he went along to reach a place called Thirupaingnyasheeli. On the way he felt hungry and thirsty but still went along without stopping. Kindness personified, Lord Shiva created a garden and a pond on the way Thirunavukkarasar was coming. He also appeared as a noble Brahmin with holy ash on His

forehead, holding food and waiting for him. When Thirunavukkarasar came near Him, He said, "You are tired of walking. Please accept this food, drink the water from the pond and take some rest." Thirunavukkarasar felt that this was Lord's blessings and accepted it. He drank the cool water. At that time the Brahmin asked him where he was going. He said that he was going to Paignyasheeli. The Brahmin told that he was also going there and both of them started. As soon as they reached the temple the Brahmin disappeared. Thirunavukkarasar who understood that it was the Lord who had blessed him became happy and sang songs in the praise of the Lord. He lived there doing service to the Lord by cleaning the premises.

Later he visited Thiruvannamalai, Kanchipuram, Mylapura, Thiruvotriyur, Kalahasthi and Srishilam etc and reached a place called Varanasi. He had a glimpse of Kashi Vishwanatha. He wished to see the Lord at Kailasa. He walked in the forests day and night without eating anything. The flesh on his feet became worn out after walking and walking for a long time. Then he started using his hands as his legs and walked ahead. Even the hands became worn out. Then like a baby he started crawling on his chest and went ahead. The bones started cracking and breaking. His wish to see the Lord did not diminish. He went rolling and rolling ahead. The Lord who saw his devotion appeared as a saint and asked him, "Your body parts have been worn out. What is your aim in coming to this forest?" Seeing His matted locks, the holy ash on his forehead, the holy thread on his chest and valkala (bark dress) on his body he got the strength to talk. "I have come here to see Lord Shiva with Goddess Parvathi in the Kailasa," he said.

The saint said, "Do you want to see Kailasa? It is not easy even for the Gods. In this situation is it possible for humans from earth? Hence it is better that you go back." But Thirunavukkarasar said, "This body is mortal. I shall not return back without having the darshan of Kailasa." The Lord who appeared as the saint disappeared. A voice from above was heard. "O great devotee! Get up!" As soon as he heard this, he was able to get up and he said, "Oh Lord! Please bless me to have the darshan of the Kailasa," he prayed. Then the Lord who always fulfills His devotee's wishes said, "O Thirunavukkarasar! You take a dip in this pond here and reach a place called Thiruvaiyar. There you shall have the darshan of Kailasa." He chanted the Panchaakshara Mantra and took a dip in the pond. He came out of a lotus pond at Thiruvaiyar. He entered the temple in this holy place. The temple looked like Mount Kailasa. Lord Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and other Gods were singing praises of the Lord. The chanting of Vedas by the saints, dances of Rambha etc, prayers of Gananatha (the head of ganas) and the dance of Nandishwara was also seen in the gathering. He saw Lord Shiva sitting along with Parvathi on the mountain. Thirunavukkarasar who rejoiced seeing this scene bowed and prostrated to the Lord again and again. He danced, shed tears of love and sang His glories. At that moment the Lord made the whole scene to vanish. Only the Thiruvaiyar temple was visible now. Thirunavukkarasar consoled himself and felt this as the Lord's blessing and sang many songs and did the service of cleaning the premises and lived there for sometime.

Later he reached Thiruponndurithi after visiting some holy places. Thirugnanasambandhar had won against Jains at Madurai in Pandya kingdom. After rectifying

the hunch back of the Pandya King he came to visit Appar here. Appar heard the news and with a desire to see him went out with great eagerness. Without anybody noticing him, he bore the palanquin made of pearls on his shoulders on which Thirugnanasambandhar was sitting. Thirugnanasambandhar who reached Thirunavukkarasar's house asked for Appar when he said, "I am your servant who had the privilege and blessing to carry your sacred feet and I am here." Hearing this Sambandar became distressed and got down from the palanquin to prostrate to Appar, but Appar bowed down to him. All the devotees shouted 'Hara Hara Hara'.

Both of them worshipped the Lord at Thiruponduritthi. Thirugnanasambandhar told everything that had happened in the Pandya kingdom to Thirunavukkarasar. He also spoke about the greatness of Kulachirai Nayanar and the queen of Pandya Kingdom, Mangayarkarasiyar. Hearing this Thirunavukkarasar wished to visit the Pandya kingdom. He said goodbye to Thirugnanasambandhar and left for the Pandya kingdom. He reached Madurai and had the darshan of Lord Someshwara. He sang songs praising Goddess Meenakshi. The Pandya king, Mangayarkarasiyar, and Kulachiraiyar gave him a grand welcome. He lived there for sometime serving the Lord. Later he visited Rameshwaram, Thirunelveli etc and then reached Thirupugalur. To show Appar's renunciation to the world the Lord threw gold, gems, and emerald in the places where he was ridding the precincts of the weeds, stones etc. But Appar threw them away like they were ordinary stones.

Later heavenly dancers like Urvashi, Menaka etc sang and danced in front of Appar showing their beauty. They came closer to him and tried to embrace him. But

he did not fall into their trap and sang songs in praise of the Lord. These women later bowed down to him and left. Thirunavukkarasar who is the idol for love and kindness lived in Pombugalur for some time singing the greatness of the Lord. On an auspicious day of the Chaitra month he attained the feet of Lord Shiva. Devatas showered flowers. Drums of the Gods were heard and everybody rejoiced.

I have explained the history of Thirunavukkarasar to the best of my ability. I bow to the lotus feet of this great man and next narrate the story of Kulachiraiyar.

Thirunavukkarayanthan Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

23. Kulacchirai Nayanar

There was a place called Manamerkudi in the Pandya kingdom. This land was fertile and was full of paddy and sugarcane fields. This place was frequently graced by Siva bhaktas. A great man by name Kulacchiraiyar lived here. He was praised by Sundaramurthy Nayanar as "Perunambi" meaning a great noble man.

He had great devotion and bowed down to Lord Shiva's devotees without any discrimination. He served Shiva's devotees with love by offering them food and shelter.

He smeared the holy ash, Vibhooti, wore the Rudraksha mala and always chanted Shiva Panchakshari mantra, Om Namah Shivaya. He loved the devotees of the Lord. He was the Commander-in-chief for the Pandya

king, Ninrasheernedumaaran. Without forgetting his goal in life, he did his duties sincerely and also fought courageously against his enemies in the war. He even supported the queen, Mangaiarkarasiyar in spreading Shaivism in the country.

He hanged the 8000 Jain followers who had lost in their argument with Thirugnanasambandhar. He spread Shaivism and devotion to Lord Shiva in south India. Praising the devotion of this great man, I sahll next narrate the service rendered by Milalaikkurumbar.

Perunambikulachiraithan Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

24. Perumilalaikkurumba Nayanar

Perumilalai was the capital city of Milalai. Perumilalai Nayanar was born in the family of landlords who owned gardens that had coconut, banana, mango and betel nut trees. They belonged to the lineage of kurumbar. He served the devotees of Lord Shiva by knowing their requirements even before they asked for it. Even when large number of devotees came at the same time, he served them with lot of food and gifts and also behaved like their attendant with humility. He considered worshiping the Lord by keeping the Lord's lotus feet in his heart.

He had great devotion to Sundaramurthy Nayanar who wrote Thiruthondathogai, which has praises of the greatness of the devotees. He believed that worshiping Sundarar was the best way to reach God. Everyday

chanting Nambi Aroorar's name with clean heart he accomplished Ashtasiddhi (eight accomplishment) such as Anima, Mahima, Laghima, Garima, Prapthi, Prakamyam, Eshithvam and Vashithvam.

Anima—reducing one's body to the size of an atom.
Mahima—expanding one's body to an infinitely large size.
Laghima—becoming weightless.
Garima—Lighter body becomes heavier.
Prapthi—Getting things those are desirable.
Prakamyam—realizing what one desires.
Eshithvam—possessing the Lordship.
Vashithvam—the power to subjugate everything.

Out of these the body can accomplish the first three and the rest can be accomplished by the mind.

He chanted the Panchaakshara mantra with great respect and devotion all the time and achieved great success in mastering the senses.

He came to know by his Yogasiddhi (powers accomplished by meditation, control of the senses etc) that Sundaramurthy Nayanar would be completing his life and reaching the Lord's abode. Thinking that he will not be able to live without Vanthondar, through the Brahmarandra he took his life and reached the Lord's abode. Worshiping his lotus feet let us tell the greatness of Karaikal Ammaiyar next.

Perumilalaikkurumbanaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

25. Karaikkalammaiyar

There was a town called Karaikkal where the conches shine on the seashore. Here lived a pious man called Dhanadatta born in the Vaishya caste. Due to his worship, a baby girl was born who was as beautiful as goddess Mahalakshmi. She was named as Punithavati.

As a child she was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. As she grew up, some rituals were performed by Dhanadatta and his relatives. She grew up to be a beautiful lady.

In a place called Nagapattina, there was a rich Vaishya called Nidhipathi. He sent word through the elders of his family to Karaikal regarding the acceptance of Punithavati for his son, Paramadatta. The elders of the town suggested to Dhanadatta that this is a very good match for Punithavati and Paramadatta. Dhanadatta agreed for this alliance. The elders went back to Nagapattina and told about this to Nidhipathi. He was very much excited and he went to Dhanadatta's house with his son and all his relatives. They performed the marriage with great pomp. Punithavati who looked like a peacock was married to Paramadatta who looked like an ox. in the grandest function of the time. (According to astrology peacock and ox make an unqualified pair.)

They were leading a very happy life. One day some men came to meet Paramadatta regarding business and gave him two mangoes. Paramadatta accepted it and finished their work. He then sent the mangoes to his house.

Punithavati took the mangoes and kept it inside the house. At the same time, a devotee of Lord Shiva came

to her house and asked for food. Punithavati had only cooked rice and the other dishes were not yet ready. So Punithavati served him with one of the two mangoes. The old man felt very happy and satisfied. He blessed her and went.

Paramadatta came to the house in the afternoon. He took bath and sat for lunch. She served him the food and the other mango along with the food. The mango was very tasty. So he asked her for the other mango. Punithavati was afraid and went inside. She did not know what to say. She went inside and prayed to God to help her. Immediately, by God's grace one mango reached her hand. She served him the mango happily. He ate the mango and was surprised that the mango was tastier than Amrutha from Devaloka. "It is not the same mango that I had sent. You cannot get such a tasty mango on this earth. Where did you get it from? He asked her.

Hearing this Punithavathi did not know what to do. She was worried to tell that the Lord had blessed her with the mango. She did not want to lie to her husband. So, she told him everything in detail.

But Paramadatta who did not even know what devotion meant did not believe her and wanted to test her. So he told her to request for one more mango. Then Punithavati went inside and prayed to Lord Parameshwara for one more mango. Again the Lord granted her with one more mango. She came and gave this to her husband. But the moment he accepted the fruit, it disappeared! Seeing this, he got frightened and realized that his wife was no ordinary woman. He thought that treating her as a wife was not possible and treated her like a Goddess.

So he decided to stay away from her, but did not tell this to anybody.

One day Paramadatta told Punithavathy that he would sail to other places on business, earn more money and return back. His relatives and other friends made a ship for him and gave him necessary things required for the journey. Paramadatta worshiped Lord Varuna and then started the journey.



Paramadatta who earned a lot of money from his business reached a city on a seashore which belonged to the Pandya kingdom. He prospered in this place and married a daughter of another Vaishya.

He did not tell anybody that he was married and has left his wife. He lived happily with his new wife. He earned a lot of money in the business and ruled the business. His second wife gave birth to a baby girl. He named her as Punithavathi, his first wife's name.

Here, his wife Punithavati did not know all these developments and was awaiting him.

Punithavathi's relatives came to know that Paramadatta was living happily with a lot of wealth in the Pandya kingdom and felt sad. They decided that it was their duty to unite Punithavathi with her husband.

They brought a golden chariot and took her in it. Her relatives, friends, and other women went along with her. After traveling for quite a long time, they reached the Pandya kingdom and then later reached the city where Paramadatta lived. They broke the news to Paramadatta that his first wife had accompanied them.

Paramadatta was shocked to hear the news. Paramadatta decided to take his second wife and daughter to Punithavathi. He went to Punithavathi and bowed down to her feet and said, "I am living because of your blessings. I have kept your good name for my daughter." Saying thus, he again bowed down to Punithavathi's feet. Punithavathi got frightened when she saw her husband bow down to her. She went away and stood near her relatives. Her relatives who saw this asked Paramadatta why he bowed down to his wife. Then Paramadatta said, "She is no ordinary woman. She is a Goddess to be worshiped. Knowing this I separated from her. I have kept her name for my daughter. She is to be worshiped by all of us. You also worship her." Her relatives were surprised to hear this.

Immediately, Punithavathi prayed to the Lord with great devotion and said, "Oh Lord! This is my husband's feelings. I have protected my beauty till now. I do not want it anymore. You please turn me into the form of a demon attendant who always serves You." By God's grace she got the form as she wished. She stood like a skeleton. There was showering of flowers from the sky. Sounds of celestial instruments were heard. Her friends and relatives bowed down to her and moved away from her.

Punithavathi wished to see Kailasa where Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi reside. People who saw her demon form got scared and moved away from her. She told

them that she was happy that the Lord had accepted her.

Karaikkal Ammayar who wished to see Kailasa crossed the countries in the northern direction at the speed of mind and later reached Kailasa. Then she stopped walking by foot and then started to walk by head. Goddess Parvathi who saw Karaikkal Ammayar coming said, "Oh Lord! Her way of walking by head shows her great devotion." Lord Shiva said that she is a great woman who is our mother to protect us. As soon as Karaikkal Ammayar who was in a demon form came near to Him, Lord Shiva called her, "Oh Mother!" Hearing this Karraikal Ammayar bowed down to the holy feet of Lord Shiva and said, "Oh Lord! My father!" The Lord asked her what she wished for to which she replied, "I wish for flawless love. I do not want rebirth. Even if I am reborn, I should not forget You. I have one more wish. I wish to sing and praise You when I see Your Ananda Narthana. I wish to stay near Your holy feet." The Lord blessed her and said, "Oh Mother! I shall dance in a place called 'Thiruvalankaadu' which is towards the South. You can see the Narthana, compose songs and be happy. Karraikal Ammayar bowed down to Shiva and that day itself walked on her head and reached Thiruvalankaadu. She saw the Lord's Narthana and sang in ecstasy.

Bowing down to Karaikkal Ammayar who was addressed as "mother" by Lord Shiva Himself and who was granted the boon of having the darshan of the Lord's dance and staying near His feet, I shall next narrate the service rendered by Appoodhiadigal.

Peyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

26. Appoodhiadigal

A great noble man called Appoodhiadigal born in a Brahman family lived in a place called Thingalur in the Chola kingdom. Though he had never seen Thirunavukkarasar Swamigal before, he began worshiping him after hearing about his devotion to the Lord. He did not have any bad qualities like anger, deception, stealing, desire, etc. He named everything in his house as 'Thirunavukkarasu' including his children, cows, buffaloes, measuring jars, charity lodge that he built for people to stay.

At this time Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal reached a place called 'Thiruthalanam' where he prayed to the Lord, did the clean-up service and went towards Thingalur. There, he saw a charity lodge where the name Thirunavukkarasu was written on all the walls and was surprised. He then asked the people, "Who built this place and kept this name?

The person who knew about this told that it was Appoodhiadigal who named it and also mentioned that he had kept the same name 'Thirunavukkarasu' for all the charity lodges that he had built and it was his intention to name it like that.

Thirunavukkarasu wanted to know why he did so and asked him where Appoodhiadigal lived.

"Appoodhiadigal lives in this city. Just now he went home and his house is nearby," he said.

Immediately, Thirunavukkarasu started from there and reached the house of Appoodhiadigal. As soon as he came to know that a Shiva devotee had come home Appoodhiadigal came out of his house and tried to touch the feet of Thirunavukkarasu but Thirunavukkarasu

bowed down to him. Appoodhiadigal said, "O kindness personified! I am fortunate to have you in my house."

"After worshiping Lord Parameshwara at Thirupuna, I saw the excellent charity lodge that you have built and your contribution to all the Shiva devotees. What is the reason behind keeping someone's name instead of your name for that charity lodge?" he asked.

Hearing this Appoodhiadigal got angry, "How can you say this great man's name as someone's name? With the help of prayer, meditation, and devotion to the Lord, this noble man has won against the Pallava king who joined hands with the Jains and brought misery to the country. He has made an ignorant man like me recognize the truth that by doing service to the Lord's lotus feet one can attain great state. I have only written the name of such a great person. He turned a rock into a log, to which he was tied to in the middle of the ocean. He then floated and reached the shore. Being a Shiva's devotee how can you speak lowly of him? Who are you? Where do you live?" he asked him.

Thirunavukkarasu who understood his love said that he was the one who by getting a rare disease was brought out of Jainism and blessed by Lord Shiva. He later fought and won against Jainism.

Hearing this Appoodhiadigal came to know that he was Thirunavukkarasu. He fell on the ground and bowed down to his lotus feet. Thirunavukkarasu also bowed down and blessed him. Appoodhiadigal felt very happy like how a poor man feels when he gets treasure. Quickly he went inside and told his wife and sons that Thirunavukkarasu has come home. He invited his friends and relatives and made them prostrate to Thirunavukkarasu.

Later Appoodhiadigal invited Thirunavukkarasu inside the house, washed and cleaned his lotus feet with water and put fragrant flowers on his feet. He made Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal sit on a chair and requested him to have a feast. Thirunavukkarasu also agreed to this.

Appoodhiadigal told his wife that by God's grace they were fortunate. Then they started cooking and prepared a good feast. He called his eldest son, eldest Thirunavukkarasu and asked him to bring a banana leaf from the backyard for serving the food.

The eldest Thirunavukkarasar cut a fresh banana leaf when a big snake appeared and bit his hand. It encircled his hand and showed its hood. The boy shook his hand and dropped the snake on the ground. "I have to reach home and give this leaf before the poison congests me and makes me fall on the ground. I shall not tell anyone about this till the noble man finishes his food." he thought and ran home. He gave the leaf to his mother. By then the poison reached his head and the whole body turned blue and he fell on the ground and died. His parents came to know that a snake must have bitten him by seeing his body and the blood oozing out of his hand. Without losing mental strength they started making arrangements for the food to be served. They covered their loving son's body with a mat and hid it inside a room. They thought



they should start serving the food and invite him to have the feast and not tell him about what had happened.

Thirunavukkarasar got up washed his hands and legs, applied the holy ash on his forehead and sat on a seat to eat the feast. He gave the holy ash to Appoodhiadigal, his wife, and all the other children and told Appoodhiadigal to bring his eldest son so that he could give him the holy ash. Appoodhiadigal said that he was ineligible to come there and did not tell what had happened.

Hearing this Thirunavukkarasar felt sad and distressed. He asked Appoodhiadigal, "I cannot accept this. Please tell me the truth." Appoodhiadigal trembled in fear. "If I tell the truth then he would not accept the feast but when this pious man is questioning I should tell the truth" he felt. Bowing down to Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal he then told what had happened. Hearing this Thirunavukkarasar got up, saw the body and told that the body be brought and placed at the main entrance of the temple. He prayed to Lord Shiva, sang the song 'Onrukolaam' and brought the poison down. The eldest Thirunavukkarasar got up as though he woke up from sleep. He bowed down to Thirunavukkarasar Swamigal and accepted the holy ash from him. Appoodhiadigal and his wife felt sad because Swamigal could not have the feast.

Understanding the concern of the couple, Thirunavukkarasar went inside their house. The couple cleaned the floor with cow dung, lit the lamps, placed the banana leaf and kept the water on his right side. Then Thirunavukkarasar asked Appoodhiadigal and his children to come and sit with him and have food. Appoodhiadigal

accepted Thirunavukkarasar's orders and sat along with his children next to Thirunavukkarasar and started having food. Appoodhiadigal's wife served the food happily. Thirunavukkarasar accepted the food with great happiness. He accepted Appoodhiadigal's request and stayed with him for quiet a long time.

Later Thirunavukkarasar reached a holy place of Shiva called Thiruppalanam. There he bowed down to Lord Shiva, praised and sang songs about Appoodhiadigal's devotion. Appoodhiadigal lived for few years doing service to the people and serving Thirunavukkarasar and later reached the lotus feet of Lord Shiva.

Saluting to Appoodhiadigal, next I will narrate the devotion of Thiruneelanakkar.

Orunambi Appoodhiadiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

27. Thiruneelanakkar Nayanar

There was a beautiful place called Shatthamangai on the banks of the river Cauvery. A Brahmin called Thiruneelanakkar lived there. He believed that worshiping Lord Shiva and His devotees is the essence of Vedas. Accordingly he worshiped Guha Thatha (Guha-Subramanya, Thatha-father) everyday. He offered food to the devotees and served them in other ways also.

On the day of Aaridra star, in the month of Margashira, as usual he did his daily worship. He and his wife went to a place called Ayavanthi to visit the Shiva temple there. His wife helped him in performing

the pooja. He finished the pooja and was doing the pradakshina in the temple. He then went inside the temple and started chanting the Panchakshara mantra.

At that moment, a spider fell from the web onto the Lord's head. Seeing this, his wife went near the Shivalinga and blew the spider away from the Shivalinga, like a mother blows away the spider when she sees it on her child. Thiruneelanakkar saw this and got very angry and abused her.

He did not think that she had done this out of great devotion to the lord. So he got angry and said to her, "You could have brushed aside the spider that had fallen on the Lord's head in a different way instead of blowing it away with your mouth. You have spit the saliva on the Lord. Hence I am leaving you at this moment itself. You leave me and get out of here immediately."

At this moment the Sun was setting. She obeyed her husband and went away from there. Again Thiruneelanakkar cleaned the Linga and did pooja and then went home.

But his wife obeyed him and that night stayed in the temple itself. Lord Shiva appeared in Thiruneelanakkar's dream and said, "Oh Thiruneelanakka! You see that there are boils in all the other places except the place where your wife has spit." Thiruneelanakkar bowed down to the Lord and with folded hands sang in praise of the Lord. Tears rolled sdown his eyes. In the morning, Thiruneelanakkar went to the temple, bowed down to Shiva. Then with great affection he went to his wife and took her back home. They continued their service to the devotees and worshipped the Lord.

Thiruneelanakkar heard about Thirugnanasambandhar and wished to see him.

At the same time, Thirugnanasambandhar along with Thiruneelakantayaalpaana Nayanar, his wife, Matanga Choodamani and his devotees reached Satthamangai after visiting various Shiva temples on their way. Hearing this, Neelanakkar was overwhelmed with joy. Immediately, he decorated the place with flags, flowers and garlands. He made pandals throughout the pathway. He went along with his relatives and welcomed Thirugnanasambandhar. He sang,danced and bowed down to them. He invited all of them to his house. He cooked a grand feast and served them with delicious food. Thirugnanasambandhar along with his followers had their dinner at Thiruneelanakkar's house that night. Thirugnanasambandhar called Thiruneelanakkar and said, "Please make arrangements for Thiruneelakantayaalpaanar's stay here. Thirugnanasambandhar thought that Thiruneelanakkar may not agree to this as he was a Brahmin but Thiurneelakantayaalpaanar was not. But Thiruneelanakkar happily made arrangements for Thirneelakantayaalpaanar to stay near the pooja mantap itself in his house, where the holy fire from the homa (sacrificial fire) was still burning. Yaalpaanar slept with his wife there.

Thirugnanasambandhar spent that night in Thiurneelanakkar's house and next day he started from there. He bowed down to Avanthinathar and sang and praised the greatness of Thiruneelanakkar in his song. Later he went on a pilgrimage and visited Shiva temples.

Thiruneelanakkar stayed in Satthamangai thinking of Thirugnansambandhar's friendship. He often went to places where Thirugnanasambandhar visited. He bowed

down to Thirugnanasambandhar and stayed with him and then returned back.

Thiruneelanakkar conducted the wedding ceremony of Thirugnanasambandhar which took place in Thirunalloor. Later he entered the sacrificial fire at Thirugnanasambandhar's wedding and reached the heavenly abode. I bow down to this great man's feet and next narrate the great service rendered by Naminandiadigal.

Olipunalchool Shaatthamangai Neelanakkarkku Adiyen

—Sundarar

28. Naminandi Adigal

There is a place called Emapperur in the Chola kingdom. A Brahmin noble man called Naminandi Adigal lived here. He was a great scholar who had good knowledge of the Vedas. He obtained pleasure in thinking of Lord Parameshwara's lotus feet throughout day and night. Everyday he had the habit of going and worshiping the Lord in Thiruvarur, which is about 6-7 miles from his place.

One day when he was serving the Lord at Thiruvarur temple, he wished to do the service of lighting all the oil lamps in the temple. But as it was already evening time it was impossible to go all the way to his place and bring back the necessary things to do the service. So he decided to request for ghee at the nearby house. With humility he asked them if they would provide some ghee.

It happened to be the house of a Jain who said,

"Why does your Shiva who has fire in his own hand need a lamp? If you need to light the lamps, then use the water in the lake to light it."

Hearing this Nayanar felt sad, went inside the temple and bowed down to the Lord.

Then a voice was heard from the sky, "Naminandi, do not worry! Take the water from the nearby lake and light up the lamps!"

Feeling surprised Naminandi Adigal bowed to the Lord again, got down into the lake chanting the Lord's name, took the water and lit up the lamps. The whole temple became illuminated with water, which became ghee by God's grace. This made the Jains feel ashamed and the kindness of the Lord spread all over the country. When the level of water came down, he filled it up with water again and again.

He returned back home the same night to worship Lord Shiva at home. He woke up in the morning took bath, prayed to the Lord, did meditation and left for Thiruvarur. Afternoon he cleaned the temple and in the evening lit up all the lamps with water and served Lord Shiva in this way. Later at night he reached his place.

Meanwhile, Shramanas fought among themselves and got killed. The motivation behind this was a great man called DhandiAdigal. Thus the number of Shiva devotees at Thiruvarur increased. The Chola king became happy with the service done by Naminandi Adigal to Lord Thyageesha. He donated a lot of wealth to the temple and granted Naminandi the privilege of taking care of all the temple utsavas. Naminandi Adigal accepted the king's orders and did service to the Lord everyday without fail.

During the Paalguna month and on Uttarashadha Nakshatra, an utsava took place. This festival was celebrated with great pomp. As a part of the festivities the Lord was taken from Thiruvarur to Thirumanali, which is about four miles from here. At this place all the people came and had the glimpse of Lord Shiva without any difference in caste and creed. Naminandi Adigal who is a Brahman mingled with all the people and had the darshan of Lord Shiva.

The Lord was brought back to Thiruvarur from Thirumanali. Naminandi Adigal went back to Emapperur. After reaching home in the evening, as he was very tired Naminandi Adigal slept near the back door itself instead of going inside the house through the front door. Seeing this, his wife asked him, "Why are you sleeping here? Please get up, worship the Lord, and then you can have food. You come and sleep inside." He said to his wife, "I was with the people of all castes at Thirumanali to have the darshan of the Lord and so I am impure. I have to cleanse myself and then come inside to worship the Lord. Hence get me water and other essential things." His wife also went inside to get the things that he had asked her for. Naminandi Adigal was fast asleep by the time she came back. The Lord came in his dream and said, "O noble Brahmin! All the people in Thiruvarur are Lord Shiva's attendants. You will see that." Quickly Nayanar got up and understood the meaning of this. "I did not worship the Lord at night. My thoughts are wrong," he felt and worshiped the Lord. He told about his dream to his wife.

Next day early morning he reached Thiruvarur. There he found that each and every person in Thiruvarur appeared like Lord Shiva to his eyes. Seeing this he

became frightened, fell on the ground and then bowed down to the Lord and rejoiced. The people who had appeared like Shiva's attendants now came back to their original form. Then Naminandi Adigal bowed down to the Lord and begged Him to forgive him. Later he left Emapperur and made Thiruvarur his home and lived there. He continued his service to the Lord remarkably. Appar Swamigal praised him that he looked like shining gold to his devotees as he fulfilled each and every devotee's wishes with sincerity. By doing service to Lord Thyageesha he finally reached the lotus feet of the Lord.

ArunambinaminandiAdiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

29. Thirugnanasambandhamoorthy Swamigal

The Chola king was a great devotee of Chandrakala-dhara, Lord Shiva. On the banks of river Cauvery, there was a place called Seergazhi in the Chola kingdom. Even when the whole world was drowned in water due to heavy floods, this place alone was sailing like a boat. Such was the greatness of this place.

This place was known by 12 other names such as Brahmapuram, Venupuram, Pugali, Venguru, Donipuram, Poondarai, Shirapuram, Puravam, Shanbainagar, Kaalyi, Kochhaivayam, and Thirukkalumalam.

In this wonderful place, there lived a great man called Shivapadahrudayar who belonged to a Brahmin family of Gauniyar Gotra. His wife's name was Bhagavathi. She was a very pious lady and was beautiful.

She was also a great devotee of the Lord and served Him with great devotion.

During this period there were many Jains and Buddhists. Hence Shaivism started to decline. Shivapadahrudayar wanted to propagate Shaivism for the upliftment of Shaivaites. He stayed near the lotus feet of Lord Thiruthoniyappar in Venupura temple and did penance to beget a son to propagate Shaivism. By God's grace, on the Aaridhra star of the Margashira month, Bhagavathi gave birth to a boy.

At that time, people of Seergazhi praised the Lord. Chanting of Vedas was heard. Plants and trees gave lot of fruits. Birds sang merrily.

Shivapadahrudayar did all the rituals to the new born baby as mentioned in the Shastras.

Pillayar grew up like a full moon. He rolled, turned over, crawled, and brought great joy to his parents. Even before he was one year old he held the hands of his maids and started walking. The thoughts of his previous birth showed up when he was three years old. He would start crying in a low pitch when he thought that he had left Lord Shiva and come.

One day as Shivapadahrudayar went for bath in the temple tank, Pillayar followed him crying. The father acted as though he was angry at him and told him to stay back at home. But Pillayar did not listen and followed him. So, father and the son reached the Bramhatheertha Lake near the temple. He made Pillayar sit on the banks of the lake. He prayed to Thoniappar (Lord Shiva) and Periyanayaki (Goddess Parvathi) to take care of his son and then took a dip into the lake. Pillayar who could not see his father rubbed his eyes with his

beautiful little lotus-like hands and started crying. Seeing the temple gopuram and calling Amma....Appa......he started crying even more loudly.

Lord Shiva, reminiscing Pillayar's devotion in his previous birth, showed mercy on the child. He appeared along with Goddess Parvathi on the holy bull. He asked Periyanayaki to take her breast milk in a golden cup and feed the child. Devi Parvathi did as she was told. She



wiped the tears and made the child sit on her lap. She mixed Shivagnanamrutha with the milk and fed the child. Pillayar stopped crying. As he was protected by the Parents of the Earth, he came to be known as Aaludaipillaiyar from that day. He drank the Shivagnana Ksheeramrutha given by Goddess Parvathi and came to be known as Shivagnanasambandhar. He got the knowledge from Lord Shiva and experienced joy.

Shivapadahrudayar who came back after taking bath saw the child playing happily. But he got angry that the child had drunk the milk given by a stranger. He told him to show who had given him the milk. He then took a stick to beat the child.

With great joy Thirugnanasambandhar pointed his little fingers towards the Lord in the temple. He sang the song,

"Thodudayaa Sheviyan Vidai Yeri"

He sang 10 songs on Lord Shiva and completed a Dashaka. Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi listened to

the songs, were very pleased and reached the temple Sanctum Sanctorum. Thirugnanasambandhar followed the Lord. Shivapadahrudayar who had picked up a stick to hit his child dropped the stick down and stood surprised. Even though he could not see the Lord, he came to know that it was the Lord's grace that had made his son sing great songs. Then he started following his child.

The people who saw this incident and heard about it gathered near the temple.

Inside the temple, Thirugnanasambandhar again sang songs and praised the Lord. Shivapadahrudayar made him sit on his shoulders.

When they came out of the temple, the people cheered loudly and praised the father and the child. Women showered fragrant flowers and coloured powders on them. Pillayar finally reached home. Next day he woke up and went to the temple. He bowed down to the God and sang songs in praise of Lord Shiva and Brihannayaki (Goddess Parvathi). Later he started for a pilgrimage to a holy place called Thirukkolakka.

Thirugnanasambandhar along with his father and a few other devotees reached Thirukkolakka. He went around the temple and then sang a song "Madaiyil Valaipaaya" melodiously to the Lord in the temple. With his tiny little hands he clapped and sang in praise of the Lord. The Lord was pleased by this and a golden Taala (percussion instrument) with the Panchakshara Mantra engraved on it reached his hands. Pillayar saw this and became very happy. Soaking in joyful tears he sang in praise of the Lord in accordance with the seven notes of musical gamut. Sage Narada hearing the child's songs showered flowers on him and blessed him. Holding

the Taala in his beautiful flower-like hands he walked towards Seergazhi. His tiny lotus-like feet became red. Seeing this Shivapadahrudayar carried his child on his shoulders and started walking. As Thirugnanasambandhar got a golden Taala from the Lord Himself, the temple at Thirukkolakka is called as 'Thiruttaalamodeyaar Koyil'. Again he entered Thoniappar temple at Seergazhi, worshipped the Lord and went back home.



The devotees of Thirunanipalli who came to know about the miracle came to Seergazhi and bowed down to the child. They invited Pillayar to visit the temple in their place and sing songs in praise of Lord Shiva. Pillayar agreed to this and started his journey. His father who could not see his son walking carried him on his shoulders. Finally they reached the place. There Pillayar sang songs in praise of the Lord. They stayed there for quite some time.

Later they reached a place called Thirutthalechengat where the temple is built in the shape of a conch. The

entire place that he walked was covered with green frond and buntings by the devotees of this place. They had decorated the whole place with plantain leaves and beautiful flowers. They welcomed him with Poornakumbha (pot filled with water). They worshipped the God in the temple there and later visited many other temples on their way and finally went back to Seergazhi.

In the meantime, a great devotee by name Thiruneelakanta Perumpanar with his musical instrument, Yaazh and along with his singer wife, Matangachoodamani came to Seergazhi to visit Pillayar. When Thirugnanasambandhar came to know of this, he went and received them. Both Yaazhpanar and his wife fell at Thirugnanasambandhar's lotus feet and sought his blessings. Thirugnanasambandhar took them to the temple. Following the moral code of those days, both Panar and his wife bowed down to the Lord standing in the outer yard of the temple. Then Pillayar told them to play the Yaazh instrument to praise the God. Thiruneelakanta Perumpanar played the Yaazh and sang in praise of the Lord, along with his wife, melodiously. Thirugnanasambandhar was very much pleased by their devotion. Devatas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and Kimpurushaas were immersed in this music. After the music concert ended, Thirugnanasambandhar took the couple with him, provided a good place for them to stay and served them a grand feast.

Yaazh Paanar went to all the holy places that Thirugnanasambandhar visited, sang songs composed by him and played the Yaazh melodiously. He requested Pillayar to grant him a boon that he should never be separated from him and always be singing his songs and play the Yaazh.

Gnanasambandhar agreed to Perumpaanar's request. Neelakanta Yaazh Paanar and his wife went on a pilgrimage with Thirugnanasambandhar and sang songs all the time.

Thirugnanasambandhar started to Chidambaram to have the darshan of Lord Nataraja. He reached the holy place Thillai. When the Brahmins and other devotees of Thillai came to know that he was visiting, they decorated the entire place and welcomed Pillayar. The noble Brahmins living here believed that serving Lord Shiva was their only purpose of life. Pillayar sang about these great men in his songs and also in praise of Lord Shiva. He felt shy to stay there and so went and reached a place called Thiruvetkalam.

One day, when Pillayar saw Chidambaram from Thiruvetkalam, the 3000 noble Brahmin devotees looked like Shivaganas to his eyes. He showed this wonderful sight to Thiruneelakanta Yaazh Paanar also. When he reached Chidambaram, he bowed down to the Brahmins before they came and bowed down to him. He went near the sanctum sanctorum, stood near the Lord and expressed the wonderful sight that he saw in a song, 'Aadinaay Narnaiyodu' and admired the Lord. He then bowed down to Chidambareshwara and came out of the temple.

Then, Thiruneelakanta Yaazh Paanar bowed down to Pillayar and requested him to visit his birth place Thiruverkaththam Puliyur and other holy places on the banks of the river Neeva. He agreed to this, visited those places and from there started for a holy place called Thiruvatturai. He did not want to trouble his father and decided to walk ahead to all the places. The devotees who walked along with him became very tired. Then,

the Lord at Thiruvatturai appeared in the dream of each of the Brahmins of that place and said, "Gnanasambandhar is coming to visit us. Receive the pearl palanquin and the pearl umbrella from the temple and offer it to him." The Brahmins were surprised and woke up from their sleep. They then went to the Lord Chandrashekara temple of that place. They opened the temple door. Oh! What a surprise! In front of the Lord's idol they saw a beautiful pearl palanquin and a pearl umbrella. They received them with great joy and went to the place called Maranpadi where Pillayar stayed.

Lord Shiva also appeared in Thirugnanasambandhar's dream, "We offer you a pearl palanquin and a pearl umbrella. Climb on the palanquin, come and see me," He said and disappeared. Gnanasambandhar woke up from his sleep. He told his father and other Shiva devotees about the dream. He woke up at dawn, finished his regular routine, smeared the holy ash on his body, and as he was doing the meditation, the sun was up. The devotees chanting 'Hara Hara' reached Thirugnanasambandhar and bowed down to him. They requested him to accept the things that Lord Shiva of Thiruvaraththurai had offered him. He chanted the Panchakshari mantra and sat on the palanquin. The devotees announced that Thirugnanasambandhar has come. They walked along with the palanquin and reached the holy place, Thiruvaraththurai. Thirugnanasambandhar got down from the palanquin a little away from the temple. With great devotion, he reached the temple and praised the Lord saying that the Lord showed mercy and protected him. With folded hands on his forehead and joyful tears rolling down he sang in praise of the Lord. He stayed for quite sometime in this place.

After few days, he went back to Seergazhi as Lord Shiva and Brihannayaki summoned him. The devotees showed their respect to Thirugnanasambandhar by covering the entire path with green fronds and decorated it with buntings and flowers. He visited many temples on his way back and finally reached Seergazhi.

The Brahmins welcomed him with great pomp. Pillayar reached the temple. Joyful tears rolled down his eyes. With folded hands he bowed down to the Lord with great joy.

He asked Thiruneelakantayaazh Paanar who was following him to leave him and go to his house and Pillayar went back home. The priests chanted the Vedas. Young girls stood holding the Poornakumbha and the lighted lamps. His mother, Bhagavathi Ammai applied the holy ash on his forehead and welcomed him with great joy.

Pillayar worshipped the Lord everyday with great devotion and sang joyously in praise of the Lord. He reached the age when thread ceremony was to be performed. He was looking vibrant wearing the deer's skin and the sacred thread. The priests performed the rituals very well. The Brahmins who came to perform the ceremony cleared their doubts about the rituals from Pillayar. He explained to them the meaning of the mantras and proclaimed that the essence of all the mantras was the Panchakshara mantra. He sang a song, "Thunjalum" and explained the greatness of Panchakshari mantra. The priests were pleased by his depth of knowledge and blessed him. Pillayar bowed down to Thoniyappar and felt happy.

Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar heard about the greatness of Thirugnanasambandhar and came near Seergazhi

to pay obeisance to him. Hearing of his arrival Pillayar went with the devotees to welcome him. Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar was an old man who had renounced worldly desires. With tears filled with joy he was incessantly chanting Lord Shiva's name. He had a spade in his hand and his whole body was smeared with the holy ash. Pillayar saw this great man and bowed down to him. Thirunavukkarasar came forward and bowed down to Pillayar. After exchanging pleasantries, both of them reached Thoniappar temple. They worshipped the Lord in the temple and went back home. Thirunavukkarasar and the devotees were given a grand feast.

Thirunavukkarasar lived with Pillayar for sometime and later went on a pilgrimage. After Thirunavukkarasar left, Thirugnanasambandhar lived in Seergazhi and composed several devotional songs compiled into books like Thirumaalaimatru, Thiruekapaadam, Thiruveeradi in the way Thoniappar appreciated it. Yaazh Paanar composed the raga (tune) and taala (beat time) for these compositions. His wife Matangachoodamani sang these songs with her husband and felt happy. Gnanasambandhar was very pleased to hear it.

One day, Thirugnanasambandhar told his father and his followers that he would visit the Shiva temples in the Dravida country, worship the Lord and return back to Seergazhi. His father Shivapadahrudayar told him, "I cannot live without you and also I wish to perform some Yaagas. I shall accompany you if it is acceptable." Thirugnanasambandhar agreed to this. Sitting on the pearl palanquin and protected by the shade of the pearl umbrella, he started along with his father, Thiruneelakanta Yaazh Paanar, and other devotees.

They visited all the temples on the way also and reached a place called Thirupaachilaachiramam on the northern banks of river Cauvery. This place was ruled by a king named Kollivalavan. His only daughter, was suffering from an illness known as Muyalagan. None of the medicines could cure her disease. The king was very sad and brought her to the temple and laid her in front of Lord Shiva. She was unconscious.

At the same time, the king who heard that Thirugnanasambandhar was visiting his place left his daughter there. He went back, festooned the place and welcomed Thirugnanasambandhar. Sambandar came with the procession to the temple, bowed down to the Lord and saw the girl who was laid there. When he asked about the details, the king said to him, "She is my daughter. She is suffering from a disease which cannot be cured and so I have laid her in front of God." Immediately, Thirugnanasambandhar sang a song in praise of the Lord. The girl got up as though she was in deep sleep and stood near her father. The king was surprised and overjoyed. He and his daughter bowed down to Thirugnanasambandhar.

Further, he continued his journey visiting all the holy places on the southern banks of the river Cauvery and reached a place called Changonnur. Just as the rainy season was over, due to seasonal change the devotees who were with him got fever. He said that it was the innateness of this place. He prayed and sang in praise of Lord Shiva for them to get well soon. Then the fever left the devotees and left the place itself. He continued on his journey visiting great places and finally reached Thiruvaaduthurai. Shivapadahrudayar wanted to

perform a Yaaga there for which money was needed. Thirugnanasambandhar went inside the temple and sang to Lord Shiva. Immediately, one Shivagana came and gave him a bag of gold coins and told him that the wealth inside the bag will not decrease. He felt thankful and gave his father the bag of gold coins. Shivapadahrudayar took it and went back home. Later continuing his pilgrimage, he reached Dharmapuram. Neelakanta Yaazh Paanar's mother was born in this place. The relatives of Paanar and other Shiva devotees welcomed Pillayar with great respect. Paanar told his relatives that he had been fortunate enough to compose raga and sing songs composed by Pillayar. The relatives who heard this proclaimed—let the greatness of music spread throughout the world.

Paanar who heard this, got frightened and fell at Thirugnanasambandhar's feet and said, "Please compose a great song that cannot be played on my instrument. You have to show them the situation." As per his request, Thirugnanasambandhar composed a song called "Maadarmadappidi". Paanar who could not match to play it on his instrument got prepared to break the instrument. Then Thirugnanasambandhar consoled him and told him that praising the Lord is beyond human power. So he told him to play the Yaazh to the extent possible and gave him the instrument.

Thirugnanasambandhar started from Dharmapuram, visited many holy places on the way and reached a place called Thirunallaru. There Paanar was able to play the song on his instrument that Pillayar had composed. Further they reached Thiruchaathamangai where Thiruneelanakka Nayanar was residing and went to his

house. They ate the meal that he had offered them. He stayed in Thiruneelanakkar's house, who was a Brahmin, along with Paanar, and that night slept there itself.

Early in the morning, they went to the temple by name Ayavandhi there and sang songs in praise of the Lord and started from there. Later they reached Thirukkeel Velur where a Shiva temple is situated. There he was welcomed by Chiruththonda Nayanar and felt happy. He then walked along with the Shiva devotees who had renounced all worldly desires and lived their life by begging. They all reached a temple called Ganapathishwaram. He accepted Chiruththonda Nayanar's hospitality and finally reached Thirumarugal.

There was a mutt near the Thirumarugal temple. A Vaishya came along with a young girl and stayed in that mutt. The Vaishya died at night after being bitten by a snake. The young girl who had not married him yet was very distressed and cried. Looking towards the temple she prayed to God. Thirugnanasambandhar heard her miserable voice and went there. He tried to console her and asked her why she was crying. "My father's name is Taaman who is the chief of a place called Vaipoor. This man is his sister's son. My father has seven daughters. He had promised that he would marry his eldest daughter to him. But he married her off to someone who came forward to give him more money. He had again promised him that he would marry one of his four daughters but did not act accordingly. So, I sympathized with him and came with him. But my fate has turned out to be like this. Please help me," she said and with folded hands bowed down to him.

Thirugnanasambandhar prayed to God to bless her.

Immediately, the Vaishya woke up devoid of poison. Both of them got married. Once again Thirugnanasambandhar was requested by Shiruthondar and he reached Thiruchangaattankudi with Shiruthondar. He later started from there and reached Thiruppugalur after visiting many temples on the way. There he was welcomed by Muruga Nayanar who always served the Lord by making garlands with fragrant flowers and decorating Lord Shiva. Pillayar went with him to the temple, worshipped the Lord and came back to Muruga Nayanar's house. Next day he again went to the temple. He praised and sang a song on Muruga Nayanar's service to the Lord. At the same time, Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar was returning to Thiruppugalur after worshiping the Lord at Thiruvarur.

Thirugnanasambandhar welcomed him and asked him about the Aaridra festival at Thiruvarur. Then Thirunavukkarasar portrayed his experiences in the Aaridra festival through his songs. Thirugnanasambandhar who heard the splendour wished to visit Thiruvarur immediately. Then he told Appar that he would go to Thiruvarur, sing songs in praise of the Lord and return back to meet him. He reached Thiruvarur after visiting many temples on the way along with his followers. The devotees of Thiruvarur welcomed him with grandeur. He got down from the pearl palanquin, offered flowers and bowed down to the holy place of Thiruvarur.

The devotees had decorated the whole place with colourful flowers. He reached the temple and bowed down to the Lord. He sang and praised the Lord. He stayed there for some time, visited the nearby holy places and then returned back to Thiruvarur.

Suddenly one day he remembered Appar Swamigal.

So he left Thiruvarur and reached Thiruppugalur. Muruga Nayanar, Appar and other devotees welcomed him with great joy. Gnanasambandhar went to the temple and sang songs praising the Lord. He then went to Muruga Nayanar's mutt. At that time, both Thiruneelanakka Nayanar and Thonda Nayanar came to Thiruppugalur and joined the other devotees.

Again they wished to visit various holy places. They requested Muruga Nayanar to stay there and sent Thiruneelanakka Nayanar and Thonda Nayanar back to their town. Later Thirunavukkarasar and Thirugnanasambandhar started on their pilgrimage. As they started walking Thirunavukkarasar said to Pillayar, "You should not walk and come when you have a pearl palanquin given by the Lord Himself." Thirugnanasambandhar agreed to this and requested Appar, "You go along with the other devotees and reach the place and I shall climb on the palanquin and join you there." Appar agreed to this. Both of them reached Thirukkadavur. There Kunguliakkalaya Nayanar with all the other Shiva devotees bowed down to them. Thirugnanasambandhar reached the temple and praised the Lord Kaalakala and sang songs. He stayed as a guest along with Thirunavukkarasar in Kunguliakkalaya Nayanar's house. They accepted his hospitality with great joy. Later they bowed down to Thirukkadavur and started from there.

They reached Thiruveelimilalai. As Thirunavukkarasar had reached before him and given the news of Thirugnanasambandhar's arrival, the devotees welcomed Pillayar with great pomp. The temple of this place has a vimaana (aerial vehicle) in which Lord Vishnu appeared to worship. They reached this temple and bowed down to the Lord with great joy.

Thirunavukkarasar was staying in one of the mutts near the temple along with all the other disciples. Thirugnanasambandhar and all his disciples stayed in another mutt to the east of the temple. Both of them went inside the temple together, prayed and sang songs in praise of the Lord.

At this time the devotees of Seergazhi came to Thiruveelimilalai to see Thirugnanasambandhar. They requested him to go with them to Seergazhi. Gnanasambandhar told them that the next day morning he would get consent from the God and later start from there.

The Thiruveelimilalai Brahmins served the devotees of Seergazhi with a grand feast. The Seergazhi Brahmins were waiting for Gnanasambandhar to start from there. That night Thoniappar appeared in Pillayar's dream. "I shall appear in the vimaana here itself in the same form as I am at Seergazhi. You can worship me here," He said and disappeared. Early morning Thirugnanasambandhar got up, took bath and went to the temple. He was overjoyed to have the darshan of the Lord in the same form. He told the devotees of Seergazhi, "Lord Shiva along with Goddess Parvathi appeared here in the same form as He is in Seergazhi. So please go back to Seergazhi." He then sent them back. After this, Thirugnanasambandhar stayed there for sometime with Thirunavukkarasar and other devotees singing hymns in praise of the Lord everyday.

Sometime later there was a severe drought with rivers drying down. The people were starving without food or water. Thirunavukkarasar and Thirugnanasambandhar were resting in their respective mutt worrying about the condition in that place. Then the Lord appeared

in both of their dreams and told them, "This famine's occurrence is natural. It will not affect you or your devotees. I shall keep one gold coin each on the eastern as well as the western dais. The gold coin will be provided only until there is famine."

Both Thirugnanasambandhar and Thirunavukkarasar woke up and reached the temple. They saw one gold coin each on both east and west dais. They took it and offered food to the devotees.

At Thirunavukkarasar's mutt, lunch was served early but at Thirugnanasambandhar's mutt the lunch was served late. When Thirugnanasambandhar asked the cook reason for the delay in offering food, the cook replied, "When the merchants in the market see the gold coin given by Thirunavukkarasar they give food grains immediately whereas when they see the gold coin given by you, they give us the food grains only after testing the impurities in the coin and hence the delay." Pillayar heard this and thought that Appar got pure coins because of his great and sincere service to the Lord. He prayed to the God to bless him with genuine gold coins. He sang the song, "Vaashi Theerave Kaashu Nalguveer". Then the Lord offered him pure coin from the next day. When the cooks showed it to the shopkeeper, they saw it and gave the food grains immediately. Now even at Thirugnanasambandhar's mutt food was served to the Shiva devotees on time.

Later, after some days, there was heavy rain and the kingdom flourished.

Thirugnanasambandhar and Thirunavukkarasar visited various temples and later reached a place called Vedaaranyam. There when they saw the main door of

the temple closed they asked the people of that place why it was closed. They replied, "The door has remained closed for a while, after the Vedas worshipped the Lord. The devotees have been entering the temple through the side door". Both Thirugnanasambandhar and Thirunavukkarasar decided to enter the temple through the main door and worship the Lord. Thirugnanasambandhar requested Appar to sing in praise of the Lord to open the door. The door did not open even when Appar sang a Dashaka (a group of 10 songs). In his last song Appar sang, prayed and pleaded to the Lord then the door opened. The devotees became excited, said 'Hara Hara' and praised the Lord. Sambandhar and Appar entered the temple and again sang songs in praise of Vedaranyamurthy and were overjoyed. When they came out, Appar requested Gnanasambandhar to sing songs to close the door. As Thirugnanasambandhar sang one song the doors got closed. The devotees were very happy to see this. From that day onwards the devotees started entering through the main door. Both Appar and Sambandhar went back to their mutt. Appar was lying down and thinking about the incident that took place at the temple. Then the Lord appeared in Appar's dream "I am at Thiruvaayur. Come there and see me," He said and disappeared. Immediately, Appar with folded hands went on and followed the Lord.

Thirugnanasambandhar who woke up and came to know of the details started from there and reached Thiruvaayur. Then the Lord along with Ambika (Goddess Parvathi) showed his dance to both of them. Thirugnanasambandhar sang songs praising the Lord. They stayed there for sometime and they went back to Vedaaranyam.

In the Pandya Kingdom Shaivism was traditionally

the most popular religion. But now Jainism flourished. The propagators of Jainism were seen everywhere. Owing to the sins of his previous birth even the Pandya king followed Jainism. But the Pandya King's wife Mangaiyarkarasiyaar and his minister Kulachiraiyar were followers of Shaivism. Seeing the state of the kingdom both of them was very unhappy. At that time, the fame of Thirugnanasambandhar reached them. They sent messengers to Vedaaranyam and told them to explain the situation in the Pandya kingdom to Thirugnanasambandhar.

The messengers who started from the Pandya kingdom reached Thirugnanasambandhar and bowed down to him. Gnanasambandhar asked them about the welfare of Mangaiyarkarasiyaar and Kulachiraiyar. They replied, "They are fine but the Pandya Empire has lost its charm because of the increasing popularity of Jainism and the king has become a Jain. So the queen and the minister have sent us to explain the situation to you." The devotees who were present there heard this and requested Thirugnanasambandhar, "Please go there immediately and reinforce Vedic principles and Shaivism. Convince the king to convert back to Shaivism." Pillayar also accepted their request.

Then Gnanasambandhar went to the temple and prayed to the Lord. Through the messengers he explained the situation to Appar and told him that he would be going to the Pandya Kingdom. Appar requested him not to go as the Jains were cruel and the stars were not good too. Gnanasambandhar convinced him that being devotees of Lord Shiva nothing bad can happen to them. He sang a Dashaka called 'Veiyuruththolipangan'. Then Appar who accepted his travel to Pandya Kingdom

requested him that he would also go along with him. But Gnanasambandhar refused and requested him to stay back. Appar agreed to it.

Thirugnanasambandhar bowed down to the Lord of Vedaaranyam and started towards Pandya kingdom. On his way he visited many other holy temples and reached the Pandya kingdom. At that time the leaders of Jainism in the Pandya kingdom experienced bad omens. They came to know that their religion will be ruined by Pillayar. When they woke up from their sleep they discussed their dreams among themselves. One man said he saw that they were fighting among themselves in his dream. Another man said that an Ashoka tree fell down and he saw that their God who was sitting under that tree started running. Yet another man saw in his dream that the Pandya king fell into the fire and then got up. At the same time the queen and the minister experienced good omens. They gave gifts to the messengers who informed them that Gnanasambandhar had entered the kingdom.

The queen called Kulachiraiyar and told him to make suitable preparations to welcome Thirugnanasambandhar. They welcomed Pillayar, bowed down to him and stood with folded hands at the main entrance of the town. Gnanasambandhar enquired about the minister's welfare. The minister told him that the queen Mangaiyarkarasiyaar had sent him to welcome him and bowed down to him again.

Pillayar who went with him watching and enjoying the beauty of the town asked him where the temple was. Kulachiraiyar showed him the Meenakshi temple. Pillayar reached the temple and stayed there along with

the other devotees. When he entered the temple, Mangaiyarkarasiyaar came there, bowed down to him and stood there. The minister introduced her to Gnanasambandhar. You have been following our religion, Shaivism, amongst other alien dominating religions. I have come here to see you. Then the queen bowed down to him again. Kulachiraiyar told about the troubles they face from the followers of other religions. The Shiva devotees of Madurai bowed down to Pillayar and became very happy. Kulachiraiyar arranged a place for Pillayar to stay. Everyone went back to their place.

The melodious music heard from the place where Gnanasambandhar was staying worried the Jains. They met the king and told him that Shaivites had come to their great place and that they have become impure after seeing the Shaivites. The foolish king also responded to it. They told the king, "The boy who has come from a Brahmin family in Seergazhi is a Shiva devotee. He sat on a pearl palanquin and came here to defeat us in an argument." When the king questioned them what they expected of him, they told him that he would get frightened and run away if the mutt where he was staying be set on fire. The king told them to go ahead and execute the work.

Then the disturbed king went to bed. The queen asked the reason for his worry. The king told her, "A Shiva devotee has come with other devotees to win over our Jain followers. I came to know about this and so I am unhappy." "Why do you have to worry about it? We shall accept the right philosophy that wins by God's grace," the queen advised and reached her mansion.

She felt very happy thinking of Pillayar who

had arrived to bless them. Then praising Thirugnanasambandhar's kindness she told Kulachiraiyar that if the Jains harm him and something bad happens then she would sacrifice herself.

At the same time, the cruel Jains went to the mutt where Pillayar was staying. They chanted mantra to ignite the fire, but they could not. When they came to know that there was no power in their mantra, they felt that the king may insult them. So they set fire on the mutt. The Shiva devotees who came to know of this put off the fire. As the news reached Thirugnanasambandhar, he decided that the Pandya king should be punished since he encouraged the Jains to do this heinous act. So he sang a Dashaka which starts with "Shaiiyane Thiruvaalavaai" and requested to God that the fire which was set on the mutt smoulder the king. Immediately the king fell sick and got unbearable fever.

The next morning the news of Jains setting fire to Thirugnanasambandhar's mutt reached the queen and the minister. They got worried and felt very bad that they were responsible for risking the life of Pillayar and decided to sacrifice their life. But immediately they came to know that the fire did not cause any damage and they were relieved.

In the meantime, the king's bodyguards hurried and gave the news that the king had developed an intolerable high fever. The extent of the fever's heat smouldered the guards and the people who came to see him in his palace. The plantain leaves and sprouts put on the king's body got burnt and crushed.

When the Jains came to know about the king's condition, they felt that this was the result of the heinous

act they had done. They came near the king and brushed the king's body with the peacock feather and chanted mantras. The feathers got burnt due to the heat of the fever. They sprinkled water drops on his body which was like ghee pouring on fire. It caused more grief to the king. He became furious and ordered them to get out of his sight. Then Mangaiyarkarasiyaar told Kulachiraiyar, "My beloved husband is suffering because of the wickedness of the Jains who troubled Thirugnana-sambandhar who had come to protect us. The minister also agreed to this. Immediately, both of them went to the King, bowed to him and told him, "The fire that was set by the Jains to destroy Thirugnanasambandhar has transformed into a high fever. The mantras chanted by the Jains would only increase your fever and not cure it. Only by the grace of Thirugnanasambandhar who has been blessed by Chandrakaladhara (Lord Shiva) this disease can be cured." The instant the king heard Thirugnanasambandhar's name, the fever subsided. By then, the king realized that the cause for his disease was the wicked act committed by the Jains and his assistants. He told his queen and his minister, "If Thirugnanasambandhar accepts to come and my disease is cured by his grace, I can realize the truth. I shall protect the religion that would cure my disease. Please invite Thirugnanasambandhar here." The queen and the minister felt delighted and went to Gnanasambandhar's mutt and waited outside. They hinted him why they had come to meet him. They went to him and bowed down to his lotus feet. Tears rolling down they stood there. Thirugnanasambandhar saw them and asked if anything bad happened to them. "We were distressed when we heard about the Jains heinous act. Later we were relieved

when we came to know that nothing happened to you and your devotees. But the fire lit by the Jains, attacked the king and transformed into a terrible fever and is annoying him. The fever could not be cured by the Jain's chanting of mantras. Please come with us to the palace, cure the king's fever and win over the Jains. Please come and protect us!" they requested.

"Do not worry. I shall win over the Jains and convert the Pandya king to Shaivism," said Thirugnanasambandhar. Both of them felt very happy. "We have been distressed, and with your support we now know that nothing is unattainable to us," they said and bowed down to him.

Pillayar decided and thought that he shall get the blessings of Somasundara and win over the Jains." He went to the temple with his devotees and bowed down to Lord Somasundara and Goddess Meenakshi. He sang a Dashaka of 10 songs to win Jainism. He prayed to God, came out and sat on his pearl palanquin.

Kulachiraiyar rode on a horse in the front and the queen followed him on her ivory palanquin. The citizens chanted "Hara Hara" "Jaya Jaya". With loud sounds made by instruments they all reached the king's palace.

Kulachiraiyar entered the palace and gave the news of Pillayar's arrival to the king. The king who was suffering from high fever asked the servants to place a golden seat near his head. Kulachiraiyar made the necessary arrangements and again went outside to welcome Thirugnanasambandhar.

At that time, the Jains requested the king "Oh king! Being a Jain follower, you are inviting a Shiva devotee. If your disease is cured by him, please tell the people

that we have also helped him in curing the disease." But the king refused to do so and told them, "I will not be dishonest. I shall follow the philosophy which will cure my illness." When they heard this the Jains became upset.

Then Thirugnanasambandhar came near the palace and got down from his pearl palanquin. Kulachiraiyar showing him the way followed the Pandya queen towards the king. The king saw Thirugnanasambandhar, who was shining like a full moon, and welcomed him with folded hands. He offered him the golden seat near his head and Thirugnanasambandhar sat on it. The Jains lost courage seeing the radiant face of Thirugnanasambandhar.

Pillayar's proximity reduced the king's fever. With great love and affection he asked Thirugnanasambandhar, "Which place are you from?" Thirugnanasambandhar replied that he was from Brahmapuri or Venupuri and sang a Dashaka of 10 songs in praise of Lord Shiva. The Jain followers who could not tolerate the abundance of Pillayar's radiance shouted and surrounded him. The queen got frightened. "Let both of them cure your disease and then start arguing," she told the king. "Oh queen! Do not think that I am just a boy who will not be able to defeat the strong Jain followers. Lord Neelakanta, who has drunk the deadly poison, is my protector. Nobody can defeat me," he assured her.

Then the Jains told the king that they will cure the fever on the left side of his body. They sat next to the king, brushed the left side of his body with peacock feather and chanted mantras. The peacock feather was burnt into ashes by the heat of his body. Then the king waited patiently for Thirugnanasambandhar to cure him. Thirugnanasambandhar sang a Dashaka in praise of the

Vibhooti (Holy ash) and offered it to the Lord. He then touched the right side of the king's body gently with the Vibhooti. Immediately the right of the king's body became as cold as a lotus pond. But the fever reached the left side of his body and increased the fever on the left side. The king was taken aback. "What a surprise! The right side of my body has a blissful feeling whereas on the left side there is high temperature. What is the power of this great man!" he thought and was greatly surprised. He told the Jains that they had lost and asked them to go back. He then requested Pillayar, "Oh great man! You are my protector. Please cure the fever on my left side and bless me." Again Pillayar sang one more Dashaka and cured his fever by applying Vibhooti on the left side of the king's body. The queen and the minister became very happy. The king bowed down to the Gnanasambandhar and begged for mercy in the presence of Jains.

The Jains could not tolerate this and became jealous. Pillayar who knew this asked them if they were ready for the argument. Then they said that they did not want to participate in any argument but they would compete with water and fire. Pillayar also agreed to this.

Following the king's orders the servants set a huge bonfire there. Pillayar untied the palm leaflets (used in earlier days for writing) in which the Dashakas sung by him were written. He took out one palm leaf and praying to God put it into the fire. It was not destroyed but was shining green in the fire. But the leaf that Jains had put in the fire turned into ashes. Within the stipulated time, Thirugnanasambandhar removed the palm leaf from the fire praising the kindness of the Lord.

The fire was quenched. The cruel Jains searched for their palm leafs amidst the ashes and became a laughing stock for everyone. But still their arrogance did not lessen. The Jains got ready for a competition with water and they said that if they fail in this, then the king could hang them.

Thirugnanasambandhar and his entourage, the king with his family and the Jains reached the banks of the river Vaigai in the city of Madurai. The Jains who were anxious to win this competition took out a palm leaf from their tome and put it into the river. It got swept away in the flow of the river. Pillayar put a palm leaf which contained a message saying that let the whole world be peaceful and happy. The leaf went against the flow of the river. Everyone who saw this sight chanted 'Hara Hara' and praised the Lord. Kulachiraiyar rode on a horse along with the leaf. As soon as Pillayar sang a song requesting the Lord to stop the leaf from moving, it stopped at the middle of the river. Kulachiraiyar collected the leaf and went back to Thirugnanasambandhar.

Before Thirugnanasambandhar placed the leaf into the river he prayed to God for the prosperity of the king. He also wrote in the leaf saying 'Let the Brahmins prosper and also let cows flourish'. The king who was a hunchback for a long time became upright and handsome. The king thought about the incident where the palm leaf went against the flow of the river and his hunchback becoming upright surrendered wholly to Thirugnanasambandhar with great joy. The devotees who were present there chanted 'Hara Hara! Mahadeva!

The king told the minister, Kulachiraiyar to hang the Jains as they had vowed. Thirugnanasambandhar

stayed calm as he did not want to offend the king's orders. He did not have any revenge against the Jains. The minister followed the orders and hanged 8000 Jain followers. Thirugnanasambandhar offered Vibhooti to the king and gladly he smeared it. The citizens of Pandya kingdom started smearing Vibhooti and became Shiva devotees. The king became religious again.

Later, Thirugnanasambandhar sat on the pearl palanquin, came from the banks of the river to Sundareshwara temple where the Lord shines with Goddess Meenakshi. Kulachiraiyar and the queen followed the king. Praising the way the Lord protected him, Pillayar sang songs.

The Pandya king prayed to God, "Oh Lord! I was under the control of Jains and forgot You. You sent Thirugnanasambandhar to protect me and to make me Your devotee. I bow down to You."

Again Thirugnanasambandhar sang in praise of the Lord along with his followers and went back to his mutt. The king got Pillayar's consent and went back to his palace along with his queen and his minister. Then Thirugnanasambandhar stayed in Madurai for sometime. At that time the citizens of that place demolished Jain temples and mutts and built Shiva temples.

Meanwhile, Thirugnanasambandhar's father Shiva-padahrudayar wished to see his son. He reached Madurai worshiping Shiva temples on his way. He bowed down to Somasundara called Aalavai Annar and came out of the temple to enquire where Thirugnanasambandhar was staying. Then the Shiva devotees took him to the mutt where Thirugnanasambandhar was staying. He was very pleased to see his son. The moment Pillayar saw his

father, he remembered Seergazhi Appar. He sang a Dashaka praising the kindness of the God and the Goddess who protected him as a small child.

Wishing to reach Seergazhi he started from Madurai. Tears rolled down the eyes of Pandya king, queen and the minister who could not be separated from him. Seeing them Pillayar invited all the three of them to go along with him for pilgrimage. Then all the three of them started with him.

Pillayar reached Thirupparan Kunram along with his devotees and the King's family. There they worshipped the God and later visited many other holy places. Finally they reached Rameshwaram. Spiritually from there he worshipped many other Shiva temples and composed poems in praise of Lord Shiva. They started from Rameshwaram and went towards north, visiting many temples on their way and then reached Manamerkudi, the birth place of Kulachiraiyar. They accepted the service rendered by the minister, the king and the queen and stayed there for some time. Then Thirugnanasambandhar wished to visit the Chola kingdom. He requested the king and his family, who wished to go with him, to go back to their capital. Pillayar who started his journey towards the Chola kingdom visited the temples on his way and then saw a river called Mullivaikarai. This river is a tributary of the river Cauvery. He wished to worship a place called Thirukollamboodhur on the banks of this river. There was plenty of water in the river. Even though there was a boat, the boatman was not there. Along with the other devotees Thirugnanasambandhar sat in the boat and sang a Dashaka in praise of the Lord. The boat reached the other bank safely. They got

down from the boat, reached the temple and sang songs admiring the Lord.

Later, worshiping Thirunallar and other temples they reached Bodhimangai. This place is full of Buddhists. The Shiva devotees of this place welcomed him in a procession. Under the leadership of their chief, Buddhanandi, the Buddhists came and interrupted the procession. Then a devotee by name Sambandhacharanalayar, who wrote and safe gaurded Thirugnanasambandhar's songs, came there. He sang a song praying to the Lord, 'Let there be lightening and let it hit Buddhanandi's head'. Immediately there was lightening and Buddhanandi's head and body got separated and fell on the ground. The Buddhists who saw this became frightened and ran in all directions. Thirugnanasambandhar reached the mutt in the procession.

The Buddhists who ran in different directions again met at a place. They chose Saaribuddha as their leader and came to have an argument with Thirugnanasambandhar. Sambandhacharanalayar who had not got the permission from Thirugnanasambandhar to kill Buddhanandi now requested Thirugnanasambandhar to give him permission to argue with them. Pillayar also accepted this. Sambandhacharanalayar and Saaribuddha started arguing. Saaribuddha and his followers who lost the argument bowed down to Thirugnanasambandhar and begged for mercy. Pillayar gave vibhooti and blessed them.

Later he reached Thirukkadavur where Amrithaghateshwara had kicked Kaala with his foot to protect Markandeya. He stayed there for sometime. Suddenly he remembered Thirunavukkarasar. He came to know that

Appar was staying in Thirupponduruthi and went there to meet him.

When they reached the border of Thirupponduruthi, Pillayar's devotees blew the horn. The devotees of that place who heard this sound hurried to welcome Gnanasambandhar. Appar also joined these devotees in carrying the pearl palanquin in which Thirugnanasambandhar was sitting. Sambandhar enquired about Appar. Appar replied that he was fortunate enough to bear his lotus feet. When Pillayar came to know that such a wise man as Appar was one of them who carried his palanquin, he immediately got down from the palanquin and bowed down to Appar. Thirunavukkarasar also bowed down to Pillayar. The devotees chanted 'Hara Hara'. Both of them went to the temple and bowed down to the Lord.

Then Thirugnanasambandhar described in detail about his visit to the Pandya capital, the good qualities of Mangaiyarkarasiyaar and the great service rendered by Kulachiraiyar. He also told about the king's conversion from Jainism to Shaivism, his win over Jains, and establishment of Shaivism. Thirunavukkarasar also described about his pilgrimage to Pillayar. Later Thirunavukkarasar bid farewell to Thirugnanasambandhar and started to visit Pandya kingdom. Thirugnanasambandhar also visited many other places on the way and reached Seergazhi. Then he went to the temple and bowed down to the Lord. He went back to his house with his father and then bowed down to his mother. He lived there happily.

Thirugnanasambandhar wished to visit the Thondai kingdom and so he started on a pilgrimage.

Shivapadahrudayar also started to accompany him. But Pillayar requested him to stay back and continue his daily worship to Venupureeshwara. The father agreed to his son's request and stayed back. Pillayar visited Chidambaram, Thirukkovalur and Thiruvannamalai and finally reached Thiruvotthur. Here the devotees welcomed him with great enthusiasm. He bowed down to the gopuram and went around the temple. He then went inside the temple and sang songs praising Lord Shiva.

Thiruvotthur is the place where the Lord indoctrinated the Vedas to the Devatas. Pillayar stayed there for sometime.

A devotee of Lord Shiva came there crying to Thirugnanasambandhar. He told him, "I grew some tall palm trees for Lord Shiva but all the trees were male trees and they did not bear any fruit. So, the Jains are hurting and criticizing me saying that if it was possible for our God, Lord Shiva to make the trees produce fruits. Please, you have to grace these trees to bear fruits." Immediately, Thirugnanasambandhar entered the temple and with great devotion sang songs in praise of the Lord. In his last song, he prayed the God to convert the male trees to bear fruits. Immediately the male trees turned into female trees and bunches of fruits were seen. Everyone was surprised at Thirugnanasambandhar's devotion to Lord Shiva. Some of the Jains who had criticized ran away from there and the rest of them became Shiva devotees.

Thirugnanasambandhar started from Thiruvotthur and after visiting many other holy places like Kanchi reached Thiruvaalankad, the place of Kaaraikkalammaiyar. Deciding not to stamp this place with his

feet, he stayed in a nearby place and spent the night. Lord Shiva of Thiruvaalankad appeared in his dream and told him that he had forgotten to sing in praise of Him. Immediately he got up from his sleep and started singing in praise of the Lord. In the morning Shiva devotees bowed down to him and took him to Thiruvaalankad. He worshipped the Lord and then reached Kaalahasthi. He bowed down to Lord Shiva on top of the mountains of Kaalahasthi who was worshipped by Kannappa Nayanar. He stayed there in a mutt. Sitting there he contemplated the Lord in Shrikailasa, Kedaranath, Gokarna, and Shrishaila. He bowed down in that direction and sang songs praising the Lord. Later he went to Thiruvotriyur.

At that time, there was a businessman called Shivaneshar in Mylapuri. He traded gold and all other precious stones. He did business abroad also. He was very wealthy but he did not have any children. He had heard about Thirugnanasambandhar and wished to seek his blessings. He had great devotion to Shiva devotees. He performed rituals to God to confer a child. By Lord Shiva's grace, his wife became pregnant. She gave birth to a baby girl. Shivaneshar did the naming ceremony of the child in a very grand manner. He offered large amounts of wealth and food grains to Brahmins.

The girl who was named as Poombaavai grew up to be a very beautiful and cheerful girl. She was loved by everyone. Who can win the destiny! She went with her friends to a garden to pluck flowers. Shivaneshar always said that he would marry his daughter to Seergazhi Pillayar. As Poombaavai was plucking the freshly bloomed flowers, a snake which was inside the creeper bit her finger. She fell down on the ground. Her friends carried

her home. When Shivaneshar came to know of the incident he was grief stricken. Many doctors were called but none of the treatment helped her. Then Shivaneshar announced that he would give all his wealth to the one who saves his daughter. So many people tried but everything failed. Shivaneshar calmed down thinking that she belonged to Seergazhi Pillayar and then burnt her body. He brought her ashes in a mud pot and placed it on a swan shaped bed. Considering it as his daughter he decorated it with all ornaments and garlands. He assigned a servant maid for decorating the pot with flowers and offered food everyday. He lighted lamps and incense sticks everyday. The people were surprised to see his devotion.

At the same time, Thirugnanasambandhar had come to Thiruvatriyur. The people gave this news to Shivaneshar. He was very much excited to hear this. He gave away expensive clothes and gold coins lavishly to the people who gave him this good news. He wished to bring Thirugnanasambandhar to Mylapuri. He decorated the entire place from Mylapuri to Thiruvatriyur with green fronds, buntings and plantain leaves. The whole path was decorated with garlands made of beautiful flowers of different colours and fragrances. It looked like heaven on earth. Shivaneshar went to Thiruvatriyur with some devotees of Mylapuri. After bowing down to the Lord at Thiruvatriyur, Pillayar had started to Mylapuri to worship Kapaleeshwara. Shivanesha Shettiyar who saw Pillayar on the way bowed down to him with great respect. Immediately Pillayar got down from the palanquin and enquired about his welfare. The people who were with Shivaneshar told Pillayar his sorrowful story. Pillayar listened to it and later reached Mylapuri. He went to the temple, bowed down to Kapaleeshwara, sang and

praised Him. Pillayar asked Shivaneshar to get the mud pot in which his daughter's ashes were kept. Shivaneshar brought the pot on a palanquin decorated with precious stones, placed it in front of Kapaleeshwara temple and bowed down to Pillayar. Jains, Buddhists, and people from different places gathered there to see the miracle. At once Thirugnanasambandhar told, "If it is true that Poombaavai had served Shiva devotees with great devotion and has done rituals and served the Lord, then let her come back to life." He then sang a Dashaka praising the Lord. As he sang, the bones, the muscles, the flesh and the skin joined. Finally when the last song ended, the mud pot broke and the beautiful 12 year-old Poombaavai got up. The devotees chanted 'Hara Hara'. Gnanasambandhar thanked Lord Shiva for his kindness. Shivanesha Shettiyar bowed down to Thirugnanasambandhar. Poombaavai bowed down to Pillayar. Thirugnanasambandhar told Shivaneshar to take his daughter home. Shettiyar requested Sambandhar to marry her as he was the one who brought her back to life. But he refused saying that she was brought back to life by the grace of the God. Settiyar and his relatives bowed down at his lotus feet and pleaded with him, but Pillayar did not agree. He calmed them by giving examples from Vedas, Puranas, and Agamas. But Shivaneshar decided that he would not give her hand in marriage with anybody else as he had promised to marry her to Thirugnanasambandhar. Poombaavai lived her life in the Kanyagruha without marrying anybody and later reached the Lord's feet.

Thirugnanasambandhar stayed there for some time worshiping Kapaleeshwara and Kalpakaambika.

Later, he went to Chidambaram to serve Lord

Nataraja who was dancing in the golden Sabha. Shivapadahrudayar who came to know that Pillayar was in Chidambaram came and met his son. Pillayar went with his father to Seergazhi, bowed down to Thoniappar and later reached home.

Shivapadahrudayar wished to perform his son's marriage, but Pillayar did not agree to this. But Shivapadahrudayar convinced his son that he could lead the life of Vedic scholar even after marriage. Later Pillayar agreed to marry. All the relatives decided that the daughter of Nambaandar Nambi in Thirunallar was the right choice to be his bride. Then Sambandhar's relatives went to the girl's house with a marriage proposal. Nambaandar Nambi also felt that Pillayar, who had been fed milk by Goddess Parvathi Herself, was the right choice for his daughter and accepted the proposal. The whole of Thirunallar was decorated with buntings and the auspicious lamps were lighted. Invitations were sent to all the people.

At Seergazhi some rituals were done to Thirugnanasambandhar. The priests tied a thread to Thirugnanasambandhar's hands. Thirugnanasambandhar donated generously to the poor people. On the day of the marriage, Thirugnanasambandhar went to the temple and prayed to Venupureeshwara. With His blessings, he sat on his pearl palanquin and started with his relatives. Loud auspicious musical instruments were played. As soon as he reached Thirunallar, he went to the temple, bowed down to the Lord and sang a Dashaka. The Brahmins and relatives requested Sambandhar to dress appropriately for the wedding.

He went inside a mutt to get dressed as a groom.

He was given bath and made to wear silk clothes. He was bedecked with garlands made of precious stones and smeared with sandal paste. Pillayar then wore rudrakshi garland and decorated his forehead with vibhooti.



Chanting the Panchakshara mantra Pillayar reached Nambiyaandar Nambi's house. The priests started the wedding rituals such as the Kanyadhaana and the Paanigrahana. Thiruneelanakka Nayanar was the head priest for the wedding. The chanting of Vedas filled the place. Pillayar who did the rituals held the bride's hands to go around the fire. The fire he wished for was the form of Lord Shiva. Thinking that he would reach the Lord's lotus feet with his bride, he went inside the temple with her. As his friends and relatives followed him, he prayed and sang to Shiva to bless him attain His holy feet. "Come and reach me in the form of this holy fire with your wife and your relatives who have come to witness this wedding." Saying this, the Lord appeared in the form of light. A door appeared from the fire to

enter inside. Sambandhar sang in praise of the Lord who was in the form of fire. He sang a Dashaka which enlightens the Panchakshari Mantra, "Namah Shivaya".

He told the people who were present there that they could enter the big holy glowing fire to liberate themselves from rebirth. Thiruneelanakka Nayanar, Muruga Nayanar, Pillayar's father Shivapadahrudayar, his father-in-law Nambiyaandar Nambi, Thiruneelakanta Yaazh Paanar and other relatives entered the fire with their wives. The people who carried the pearl palanquin and some of his servants entered the fire. The sages who came to bow down to Pillayar and other people present there entered the fire. Thirugnanasambandhar who was born to redress the predicament in this world went around the fire and entered it with his young wife. Immediately the fire disappeared. The Thirunallar temple came back to normal. All the people, who heard about Pillayar reaching the Lord's feet through the holy fire, bowed down to Thirugnanasambandhar.

I have narrated the history of Thirugnana-sambandhar, who was the greatest devotee of Lord Shiva, to the best of my ability. Next I shall narrate the service done by Kalikkamanar.

Vambaraa Parivand Mananaara Malarum
Madhumalar Nar Kondrayaan. Adiyalaarpena
Embiraan Sambandhan Adiyarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

30. Eyarkon Kalikkaama Nayanar

There was a place called Thiruperumangalam in the Chola kingdom. It was located in the east on the north shore of river Cauvery. Here there lived a group of people called Eyar. These people were interested in farming. For generations they had been ministers in the Chola kingdom. Kalikkamar, a Shiva devotee was born in this tribe. He did a lot of renovation work in the famous city of Thiruppunkur. He always smeared the Holy Ash and indulged in singing and praise of Lord Shiva.

Eyarkon Kalikkaama Nayanar became annoyed when he came to know that Sundaramurthy Nayanar sent Lord Parameshwara himself as a messenger to his wife, Paravaiyar. He developed enmity with Sundaramurthy Nayanar who used Lord Shiva, the chief of the 14 worlds, as a messenger. Knowing this Lord Shiva wanted to teach a lesson to Kalikkaama Nayanar and made him get stomachache. As the Lord himself created it, this pain became unbearable by Kalikkamar.

Not able to bear the pain, Kalikkamar praised Lord Shiva's lotus feet with his songs. Lord Shiva appeared before him. "This disease has to be cured by Sundarar and there is no other alternate cure for this," He said and disappeared. Hearing this, "You are the one who protected my father, my grandfather, and my family for generations. If you cannot cure me of this I do not wish to get my disease cured by someone who used you as a messenger. I shall suffer from this disease rather than getting it cured by him. O dear Lord! You are on Sundarar's side," he lamented.

"Eyarkon Kalikkaama Nayanar is suffering from

stomach ache because of me. Please go there and cure him of this disease," Lord Shiva said to Sundarar and disappeared.

Nambi Aroorar rejoiced and bowed down at Lord Shiva's feet. Yearning to have friendship with Eyarkon he sent a word for Eyarkon Kalikkaama Nayanar that he would be visiting him and then he started. Hearing the Lord's words made Eyarkon sadder than the pain he was suffering from the disease. He was more hurt when Sundarar sent word that he would be coming to cure him. He decided not to get the disease cured by him. With a dagger he severed his stomach and died. Seeing this, his wife also wished to die with him.

By then she came to know that Sundarar had reached the place. She covered up the news of her husband dying of suicide and hid the body inside a room. She ordered to welcome Sundarar with pomp. The people also obeyed her orders, lit the lamps in front of their house and welcomed Nambi Aroorar with devotion. Sundarar came inside their house with a big smile and sat on the chair. He accepted their ritualistic welcome.

Nambi Aroorar said, "I have to see Kalikkaama Nayanar now itself." He also said that he wanted to cure him of his disease. By his wife's motivation the servants told him, "Kalikkaama Nayanar is doing fine and has no problem. He is taking rest inside his room." Nambi Aroorar was still not in peace of mind. So he pestered them that he wanted to see him. With no option left, she took him to the room where Kalikkaama Nayanar was lying. Seeing Kalikkaama Nayanar's body with blood flowing out of his mouth, he said, "O! How dreadful is this! Then I shall also kill myself." Saying this Sundarar took out a knife to kill himself.

Then by God's blessings Kalikkaama Nayanar got back his life, "O! Friend! Please Wait!" He said and held his hand. Sundarar saw this and bowed down to Kalikkaama Nayanar. Both of them rejoiced, hugged each other with love and later together went to a place called Thiruppunkur, worshipped, sang and praised the Lord there.

After some time Sundarar came back to Thiruvarur with Kalikkaama Nayanar. Staying as a guest of Sundarar, Kalikkaama Nayanar worshiped Lord Thyageesha and lived there for sometime. Later Kalikkamar went back to Thirumangalam. He lived there doing service to Lord Chandrashekara.

Let us bow to the lotus feet of Kalikkaama Nayanar who became an enemy of Nambi Aroorar and later became his friend. Next I shall narrate the greatness of Thirumoola Nayanar.

Eyarkon Kalikkaaman Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

31. Thirumoola Nayanar

The Kailasa mountains which is the abode of Lord Shiva is guarded by Nandikeshwara. Here many Shivayogis are present who have been blessed by Lord Shiva. One such Shivayogi was Sundaranathar who had acquired Ashtasiddhi. He was a very close friend of Sage Agasthya. Sundaranathar who lived in Kailasa wished to live with Kumbha and Sambhava and hence left for earth.

He wished to meet Sage Agasthya who lived in the Dravida kingdom. On his way he visited many Shiva temples such as Kedharanatha at Kedhara, Pashupathinatha at Nepal, Vishweshwara on the banks of the river Ganga, Mallikarjuna at Vindhyachala, Kaalahastheeshwara & Parameshwara at Thiruwalankad and finally he reached Kaanchipura. There he worshipped Lord Ekambareshwara and stayed for some time with the Shivayogis of that place and then went to Chidambaram. He worshipped Lord Nataraja and reached the northern banks of river Cauvery. After taking a dip in the river Cauvery he reached the southern banks of Cauvery and then reached a place called Thiruvaavadutturai. Here Goddess Umadevi disguised herself as a calf and worshipped Lord Shiva. Sundarnathar wished to live in this holy place.

But after motivation by Lord Shiva, he left that place and reached the banks of the river Cauvery. On the way he saw a herd of cows. The cows looked very healthy but he could see that they were all crying of sorrow. He went near the cows to know the reason. He saw a cowherd boy who had died of snakebite. The cows stood in front of the cowherd's body and were crying of sorrow. By Kailasanatha's motivation he thought to himself, "I shall wipe out their sorrow. The only way to do this is to wake up Moolan, the cowherd." Through Prakamya Siddhi, the kindhearted Shivayogi Sundaranathar hid his own body in one place and entered the body of the cowboy. The cows saw Thirumoolan who got up and with joy they licked him. The cows lifted their tail, went around him and showed their happiness. He let the cows graze and made them drink the crystal clear Cauvery water and guarded the cows.

As the sun set, thinking of their young calves, the cows started towards their place, Chaathnoor. Thirumoolar also followed them. As the cows reached their respective houses, Thirumoolar stood in front of their houses. The cowherd's wife, who saw him immersed in thought tried to touch him. Immediately Thirumoolar told her not to touch him. The cowherd was childless and had no friends or relatives. When he told her not to touch him she stood there frightened and sad. Thirumoolar told her that there was no relation among them and reached a Dharmachatra (a free charitable public dwelling place) and stayed there.

The cowherd's wife did not know what to do and could not sleep that night. The next day, she went to the revered elders of the place and told her sorrow. They went to the Dharmachatra where Thirumoolar stayed and understood his position. They returned and said that as he is the Trigunatheetha (the Lord), one who has gone beyond birth and death (Jeevanmuktha) which is difficult to achieve, it would be difficult for him to live with friends and relatives. The cowherd's wife who heard this started crying. The noble men took her back home.

Thirumoolar who was in the Chaathnoor mutt started from there, walking on the same path the cows had brought him the previous day. He searched for the body that he had hid but could not find it. But it became clear to him that Lord Shiva wished to bring out the secrets of Shiva Agama through him and so he stayed patient. He told the truth to the cowherds, who came and surrounded him, that there was no relationship among them. The cowherds went back unhappy.

After they went back, Thirumoolar reached the temple of Thiruvaavadutthorai and sat for penance under the

Ashwatha tree. He became immersed in God. He later started writing a book called "Thirumantramala "which explains the four paths (Margas), Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Gnana to liberate from the cycle of birth and death. Starting with Vanravan Thaane he composed at the rate of one poem a year. He lived in Shiva yoga for 3000 years singing 3000 poems and offered it to the world. Later by God's grace, he attained the lotus feet of the Lord Shiva.

Bowing down to Thirumoolar who wrote the book Thirumanthram, I shall next narrate the service done by Dhandiadigal.

Thambiraan Thirumoolan Adiyarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

32. Dhandiadigal Nayanar

DhandiAdigal was born in Thiruvarur in the Chola kingdom. Even though he was born blind, he felt happy chanting Namah Shivaya and going around the Thiruvarur temple everyday. He did not wish to see the world, as he was able to get happiness by seeing Lord Shiva through contemplation.

There was a pond towards the west of the Thyageesha temple. As there were ruins of the Jain temples surrounding the pond, the pond appeared small. As service to the Lord, DhandiAdigal decided to dig the sand surrounding the pond and expand it. He wedged a rod as a mark inside the pond. He tied one end of a rope to the rod and the other end to a tree, which was on the banks of the pond. Holding the rope as support he

got inside the pond and with a spade put the sand inside a basket and dumped the sand on the banks of the pond. Chanting Namah Shivaya he performed his duty with great enthusiasm.

The Jains who felt jealous went to him and said, "Stop digging the sand as the small bugs inside the sand will die. "Hearing this DhandiAdigal said, "You foolish people! You do not know that doing service to Lord Shiva is not a sin. "Hearing this, the Jains criticized him and said, "You do not want to listen to our advice. You are blind and it appears you are even deaf." Then Dhandi-Adigal said that they are the ones who are mentally disabled, blind and deaf at the same time. What would they do if they lose their eyesight? Hearing this they said, "If we lose our eyesight by your Lord's supremacy we shall not live in this place anymore." With anger they cut the rope and pulled out the rod and the spade and threw it. Helpless DhandiAdigal reached the temple. He bowed down to the Lord and said, "O Lord! The Jains have insulted me and I feel sad. You have to protect me." He sobbed and felt sad that he could not do service to the Lord.

That night Lord Shiva appeared in his dream and said, "You shall get your eyesight back and at the same time you can see them become blind." The same night the Lord appeared in the Chola king's dream and said, "A noble man by name Dhandi tried to salvage our pond but the Jains destroyed it with jealousy and hence he is sad. You have to comprehend his intention and fulfill his wishes."

The king woke up, rejoiced and worshipped the Lord. Next day morning he went to DhandiAdigal's mutt and informed him about his dream. He said, "I tried to

salvage the pond, but the Jains criticized me. They grabbed the rope, spade and the rod and threw it. They hurt my feelings by harsh words. I asked them what they would do if I get my eyesight back by God's grace and they promised that they would leave this place. This is what happened and you have to solve this problem." When the Chola king enquired the Jains about this they also agreed that they had promised. Everyone went to the banks of the pond to solve this issue.

DhandiAdigal dipped in the pond saying "If the service I am doing to Lord Shiva is true I should get my eyesight back in presence of the king and the Jains should lose their sight." Saying this he started chanting the Panchaakshara. When he got out of the pond he had got his eyesight back. All the devatas showered flowers. At the same time the Jains lost their sight and were terrified. Seeing this, the Chola king told the citizens of his kingdom to chase the Jains from there who criticized DhandiAdigal.

As per the sayings "Dharma Eva Hatho Hanthi" the Jains who had committed sins had to endure it and were chased by the soldiers. They ran in all directions. The Chola king destroyed the houses of the Jains, salvaged the pond in the way Nayanar had wished for. He then bowed down to Nayanar and went back to his palace.

DhandiAdigal did service to the Lord and later reached the lotus feet of Lord Shiva. I bow to the feet of DhandiAdigal who even though blind tried to salvage the pond and did service to the Lord. I shall next narrate the service done by Moorkha Nayanar.

Naatamig Dhandikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

33. Moorkha Nayanar

There was a place called Thiruverkadu in the Dravida kingdom. (This place is four miles to the east of Chennai.) Moorkha Nayanar was born in a good family who were devotees of Lord Shiva. His ancestors were agriculturists. He believed that serving the Shiva devotees is serving the Lord. He was always engaged in feeding the Shiva devotees. With great love he served the people and hence the number of people who came there increased and his wealth also started decreasing.

To acquire wealth he started gambling which he had learnt when he was young. As there were nobody who gambled where he lived, he went to other places and gambled and made wealth.

He would lose wealth in the first game but later he would win and gain lot of wealth. He would not even touch the wealth that he had won. He would give the wealth to the cooks and ask them to serve food to the devotees. If anybody opposed him while gambling he killed them with his dagger. Because of this reason he came to be called as 'Moorkhar'. Traveling many places he reached Kumbhakonam. He stayed there and served the Shiva devotees. He would serve the people with the wealth he had won in gambling. After feeding all the devotees he would later accept the prasadam.

Following the words, "Anya Kshetra Kritham Paapam Kumbhakone Vinashyathi, Kumbhakone Kritam Paapam Kumbhakone Vinashyati" Moorkha Nayanar lived in Kumbakonam and got rid of the Paapam (sins). After sacrificing his body, he was worshipped by Shivaganas because of his virtuous deeds and later reached Kailasa.

I shall bow down to Moorkha Nayanar who had won invaluable wealth by gambling for feeding the Shiva devotees. Next I shall narrate about Somasimaara Nayanar.

...........Moorkharukkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

34. Somasimaara Nayanar

Somasimaarar lived in a place called Thiruvambar in the Chola kingdom. He was born in a Brahmin family. He felt that Lord Shiva's devotees were superior to the Lord himself and hence he gave food to all Shiva's devotees who came to him. He served one and all the devotees in the same way. He believed that only chanting the Panchaakshara could cleanse the thoughts and did the same.

He had great devotion for Sundaramurthy Nayanar and hence lived in Thiruvarur with Aroorar. Everybody in his proximity was able to conquer desire and temper as he had conquered desire and temper. He was blissful and by self-discipline was able to reach Lord Shiva's abode.

Ambaraan Somasimaaranukkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

35. Saakkiya Nayanar

Saakkiya Nayanar who was born in a peasant family, lived in a place called Thiruchchangamangai near Kanchipuram. Wishing to liberate himself from the cycle of birth and death, he left his place and went to Kanchi in quest of truth and knowledge. At that time, Buddhism was prominent in that place. He felt that Buddhism was a great religion compared to others, hence became a Buddhist. He read a lot about Buddhism but later by Lord Shiva's grace, he came out of Buddhism and realized that devotion to Lord Shiva is the only path to Moksha (liberation of soul from the cycle of birth and death forever).

Saakkiya Nayanar established the fact that one can become a Shiva devotee by always remembering the Lord in his heart no matter where he lives or what he wears. So with the appearance of a Buddhist, he became a great devotee of Lord Shiva. As the saying goes, "Bhaavasthathra He Kaaranam" the Lord, who was aware of his intention, was pleased.

He followed the daily routine of worshiping the Shivalinga, do Archana (doing prayer and offering flowers by chanting the Lord's names) and then eat or drink. Once he saw a Shivalinga in a place. He wished to worship the Lord by doing Archana. Without realizing what he was doing, he picked up a nearby stone and thinking it as a flower threw it at the Linga like he was doing Archana. Like parents who will be pleased by the pranks of their child, Lord Shiva was pleased by Nayanar's act.

The next day as he got ready to worship the Lord,

he thought of the way he had worshipped the Lord the previous day. Then he thought, "Yesterday the kindhearted Lord gave me the notion to worship Him this way. So, I shall worship the Lord everyday in the same way." So he worshipped the Lord and did the Archana everyday by thinking the stones to be flowers. This method of worship with great devotion by him pleased the Lord.



This way Saakkiya Nayanar was worshiping the Lord by throwing stones. One day as he was very tired he forgot to worship the Lord and sat down to eat the food. Immediately he realized his mistake. He got up and with great enthusiasm worshipped the Lord by throwing a stone. The Lord who was highly pleased by his true devotion appeared on the holy bull along with Goddess Parvathi and took Saakkiya Nayanar along with Him to Kailasa.

Vaarkonda Vanamulaiyaal Umaipangankalale
Maravaadhu Kallerindha Saakkiyarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

36. Sirappuli Nayanar

There was a place called ThiruAakkur in the Chola kingdom where the river Cauvery flows. As Thirugnanasambandhar praised and sang in his songs, this place had Brahmins who showered great love and were very generous and offered people with anything they wished for. The chanting of the Vedas was always heard in the gardens and houses of this place, which was louder than the sound of the clouds. The smell of the homas (religious practice) performed by the Brahmins was stronger compared to the smell of the sambhrani (incense that has a fragrant smell) smoke.

Sirappuliyar born in a Brahmin family was living in this great place. He always worshipped Lord Neelakanta and served His devotees. When he saw any Shiva devotee he prostrated to them, sang wonderful songs, served them good food, and offered them what they wished for generously. His fame reached in all directions.

Sirappuliyar worshipped Lord Shiva with great devotion, chanted the Panchaakshara, did Yaga and Yagna (ritual of sacrifice) with great respect and thus reached the feet of Lord Shiva.

Seerpetra Pugal Vallal Siripullikkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

37. Sirutthonda Nayanar

Thiruchchangaatakkudi was a place in the fertile Chola kingdom, which is praised as land of Cauvery. This place is the abode of Parameshwara, who had burnt Manmatha to ashes. In this place, there lived a great person by name Paranjyotiyaar who was born in the Mahamaathya caste. It is said that these Mahamaathyaas had been doctors since generations. It is said that Mahamaathyaas were head of a conference group and the king always took decisions after consulting them. These people wore the holy thread just like the Brahmins.

Paranjyotiyaar was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. He was interested in the welfare of humanity. He was a great scholar in Ayurveda and had adept knowledge and proficiency in Sanskrit also. He was an expert in the usage of arms. He was also highly skilled in horse riding, elephant riding and usage of bow and arrow. But he knew that the only way to happiness was to always remember the Lord and bow down at His feet. Like water flowing into a stream his love and devotion towards God was flowing into the Lord's feet and remained there. He served the Shiva devotees with great love. Paranjyotiyaar stood as support to the great king. He had been the head of the elephant army, won many battles for the king and was greatly respected by the king.

Once Paranjyotiyaar attacked a place in the northern country called Vaathapi. With his elephant army he had destroyed the city and won the battle. He offered horses, elephants and the wealth that he won in the battle to the king. The king was very pleased and praised Paranjyotiyaar's valiance.

Then the ministers in the king's court told the king, "Paranjyotiyaar is a devotee of Lord Shiva. He serves the devotees of the Lord. Nobody in this world can confront him." They thus praised him. The king who came to know that he was a Shiva devotee apologized and told him "Oh! I have made a mistake. I did not know that you are a great devotee of Lord Shiva but I sent you to the killing battle field." Saying this he fell on Paranjyotiyaar's feet and requested him to excuse him.

Hearing this, Paranjyotiyaar bowed down to the king and replied kindly, "I just did my duty, so there is no possibility of doing sin." Then the Chola king gave him plenty of precious stones and gold coins and told him, "Without knowing your nobility I made you as a minister. I request you hereafter to stop doing this and continue your service to the Lord." Saying this he bowed down to Paranjyotiyaar and sent him. Paranjyotiyaar got the king's consent and started back to his place.

Paranjyotiyaar worshipped Lord Ganapatheeshwara at Thiruchchangaatakkudi and continued his service to the Lord. He married a girl by name Thiruvengaatunangai and was leading a happy life.

Everyday Paranjyotiyaar ate food after serving the food to the Shiva devotees and felt it was his duty to do so. He served a feast of meat, ghee, milk, curds, sweets, fruits to the devotees and felt very happy and satisfied. He thought himself as very small in front of the devotees of the Lord and served them. Hence he came to be known as Siruthondar (Siru meaning small and Thondar meaning servant).

Later Siruthondar became engaged in the renovation

of the Ganapatheeshwara temple. At the same time, his wife, Venkaatnangaiyar became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. He was named as Seeraaladevar. They celebrated their son's birth in a very grand manner. Seeraalan grew up with good qualities. The parents did the Jaatakarma (birth ceremony), Namakarana (naming ceremony), Karnavedhana (ear piercing), Chowla (hair removal ceremony), Upanayanam (thread ceremony) and sent him to gurukula at the appropriate age.

At that time Thirugnanasambandhar arrived at Thiruchchangatankudi. Siruthondar came to know about this and went to receive him. Thirugnanasambandhar stayed there with him for few days and sang songs praising Siruthondar's philanthropic qualities.

The greatness of Siruthondar's service to the devotees reached Kailasa. To experience it, the Lord disguised in the form of Bhairava Jangama (ascetic who worships a form of Lord Shiva). He tied His matted hair and the Thumba flowers on His matted hair were shining like twinkling stars in the sky. The Sun, the Moon, and the fire became His three eyes. Holding the drum in His right hand and the deer that signifies Vedas and the Thrishula (trident) in His left hand, He reached Thiruchchengatankudi.



Pretending as though he was very hungry and enquiring about where Siruthondar's house was he reached Siruthondar's house. He stood in front of the house and

asked if Siruthondar, who everyday offered food to Shiva devotees, was there. Then one of the servants named Chandananangaiyar came out, thinking that he was a very great saint and bowed down to him and said, "Our master has gone out in search of Shiva devotees. Please come inside."

Then the Bhairava said that he would not go inside the house where only women are present. Siruthondar's wife who heard this, fearing that he would go away, came running to the door. "Everyday my husband is in the probity of feeding the hungry devotees. As no devotee came to the house today, he has gone out in search of devotees. He will come any time now and as you are new to our house, my husband will be very happy to see you. Oh great man! Please do come inside," she requested Him.

Bhairava Jangama told her, "I live in the northern part of the country. I have come here to see Siruthondar. I shall not come inside when he is not there. I will stay at Ganapatheeshwara temple. Please inform this to him." Saying this, he reached Ganapatheeswaram temple and sat down under a tree.

Siruthondar who had gone in search of the devotees could not find anyone and came back home feeling very sad. He told his wife about his search. She heard this and told him, "A Jangama from the northern part of the country had come to see you and he enquired about you. He said that he did not want to come inside when you are not at home and would stay at Ganapatheeshwara temple." Siruthondar who heard this felt very happy and hurried to the temple. He saw the Jangama and bowed down to Him. When Bhairavar asked if he was

Siruthondar, he said to Him, "I am the dust of Shiva devotees' feet and I have been fortunate to have your darshan today." "My aim is to offer food to a devotee everyday. Today I could not find anyone and was very sad. It is the good deeds of my previous birth that I have got the darshan of you. So please do come to my house and accept the food," he thus requested Him.

Hearing Siruthondar's words, Lord Shiva who had disguised as a Jangama gave a smile and told him, "I have come from the North to see you, but it will be really difficult for you to serve me the food I like." Then Siruthondar said, "Oh great saint! I shall serve you the food that you like to eat. It is not difficult for me to get anything that the devotees ask for." Then Bhairavar told him, "Oh kindhearted man! Listen to me! I fast for six months and at the end of six months I eat meat. And the meat I eat should be of a human being. The meat should be of a 5-year-old healthy boy who is the only son to his parents. The mother should hold the son's body and the father should cut it. The parents have to then cook the food without any grief. I shall only eat the food cooked in this way."

Even after hearing this, without distortion of thought, Siruthondar bowed down to Him and told Him that the food would be ready soon and hurried back home. He reached home and explained to his wife, Thiruvenkaatvangaiyar about the conditions put to him by the Jangama. Both of them thought for sometime about where to get such a child. Then Siruthondar told his wife that the noble way to get Janma saphalya (making one's birth in this world successful) is to offer their only son to the Jangama Bhairava. They decided that to satisfy the saint, they should sacrifice their own

son. Hearing this, "Yes. Please go and get our son from the gurukula," she said and went inside the house to make further arrangements for the lunch.

Having got the wholehearted consent from his wife, Siruthondar reached the school and brought his son back home. He gave the child,who embraced him, to his wife. She gave the child a bath and again returned the boy back to her husband. For the last time he embraced his son and tried to kiss the child but quickly abstained from kissing him as he felt that he would become impure. As the mother held the boy tightly, his father cut his loving son with a knife. Siruthondar said that he is a good son who was of great help in offering food to a noble devotee. Saying this he cut his son's body into pieces. "This child is the apple of my eye who has protected my husband's life," the mother said. Putting the son's body parts in different dishes and thinking that the noble man would not accept the head part, she gave it back to the servant, Chandanathaal. With all the ingredients she cooked the meat well. She cooked rice and other curries quickly.

Siruthondar joyously hurried to the temple. He apologized for the delay in cooking the lunch. He then requested Him to go with him to have the food. Jangama accepted his request and both of them reached the house. He washed the Jangama's feet with fragrant water and worshipped His feet. With great devotion, Siruthondar's wife served the food on a wooden plank covered with a clean white cloth. Jangama who saw the food asked them if they had prepared the food using all parts of the human body like he had mentioned. Immediately Thiruvenkatmangaiyar told him that she had not cooked the meat of the head. Bhairavar said that he would eat

the head part also. As Siruthondar and his wife became worried hearing this, their servant came and told that she had prepared the meat of the head which can be eaten and brought it. His wife served the food and Siruthondar bowed down to Him.

Later Jangamar told Siruthondar to invite a Shiva devotee who would join Him to eat the food as he would not eat the food alone. Then Siruthondar hurried out and went in search of a devotee but could not find anybody. He came inside with a sad face and told, "I could not find any Shiva devotee. What shall I do? My principle is to offer food to ash smeared Shiva devotees only."

The Jangamar who heard this said with a smile that there is none other great devotee in the world than Siruthondar himself and invited him to sit with him and have lunch. He also told his wife to serve Siruthondar the same food which has been served to him. The devoted and loyal wife also did as she was told.

Immediately Siruthondar thought that to make Bhairava Jangamar accept the food, he had to hurry and got ready to have the food. Seeing this, the Jangamar said, "Why are you in a hurry to have food even though you have been eating it everyday, I have food only once in six months but I am sitting calmly. Wait! If you have a son ask him to come and join us." Siruthondar told him that he had a son but now he could not come and join them.

Jangamar told to him. "Unless your son comes here I shall not accept the food. Go search for him and get him here." Without knowing what to do, Siruthondar went outside with his wife and called for his son. His

wife also called him with a loud voice, "Oh my dear son! Seerala! Come soon! The Shiva devotee is waiting to have the food with you."

Then by Parameshwara's grace, Seerala came home running as though he was coming back from gurukula. The mother who saw him became overjoyed, embraced and carried him to her husband. Then they carried him inside and felt that now there was no obstruction in acceptance of food by the Jangamar. But Jangama was not to be seen anywhere and the food they had cooked had disappeared. Siruthondar was disappointed and came out in search of the Shiva devotee.

The Lord in the form of Bhairava Jangama who had disappeared, appeared there on the holy bull along with Goddess Umadevi and Lord Subramanya.

Siruthondar, his wife, son and the servants were overjoyed and had the darshan of Lord Shiva. They prostrated to the Lord and sang in praise of Him. The Lord blessed Siruthondar, his wife Thiruvenkatmangai, his son Seerala and the servant, Chandanathaal and took them to Kailasa along with him.

Bowing down to the holy feet of Siruthondar who had sacrificed his only son and cooked his meat to offer it to a Shiva devotee, I shall next narrate the service rendered by Kalatrit Arivaar.

Chengaatankudi Maeya Siruthondarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

38. Kalatrit Arivaar Nayanar

The Chera kings protected Malainadu where Goddess Lakshmi always resides. Kodumkolur was their capital. Lord Shiva shines in the Thiruvanjaikalam temple of this great place. The beauty of this place is unexplainable. It was always filled with the chanting of the Vedas by Brahmins, the trumpeting of the baby elephants, the sounds of horses neighing, buzzing of the bees in the garden etc.

The king Chengorporaiyan, who was ruling the kingdom followed the laws of Manu dharma and took care of the people well. A son by name Perumakkodhayar was born to him.

Perumakkodhayar had no interest in worldly pleasures. He always spent time in the service of Lord. He lived in a mansion near the Thiruvanjaikalam temple and served Lord Shiva in the temple.

When Chengorporaiyan wanted to leave the throne and became interested in meditation, the ministers requested Perumakkodhayar to rule the kingdom. The king was not interested in the worldly pleasures but could not reject their request prayed to the Lord to show him the path. Lord Shiva of Thiruvanjaikalam temple blessed him and said, "Take care of the citizens like children and show your love and protect them. If anyone wishes to tell or ask you anything I shall give you the strength to understand the truth behind it. Rule the country by donating generously. You shall obtain immeasurable army and my grace will always be with you."

Since he had the supremacy to understand what

everyone wished to tell him he got the name as Kalatrit Arivaar.

He went to Thiruvanjaikalam temple and prostrated to Lord Shiva. After getting crowned as the king at the auspicious time, he sat on the royal elephant and went on a procession. On the way he saw a washerman covered with white lime. He felt that the man must be a Shiva devotee smeared with Holy ash and got down from the elephant to salute the washerman with folded hands. The washerman said, "O king! I am just a washerman." Then the king said, "I am just a Chera. Please do not mistake me. Your appearance reminded me of a Shiva devotee." He later sent him back, sat on the elephant and went back to the palace.

The Chera king did the service of decorating Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram with different fragrant flowers, perfumed smoke, ghee lamps, food offerings and flag hoisting everyday. He bowed down to the Lord with devotion. Everyday the Lord showed His acceptance of his devotion by making a clinking sound of His anklets. The king felt happy and by worshiping the Lord ruled the kingdom efficiently.

As the Chera king was ruling the kingdom with justice, Lord Shiva wished to give a lot of wealth to a musician by name Paana Bhadra. He lived in the city of Madurai in Pandya kingdom. He sang songs in the praise of the Lord. Lord Shiva appeared in his dream "Oh Bhadra, Cheraman Perumal is my devotee. I shall confer you a letter that you can show him. He will offer you with lot of wealth, gems, and expensive clothes etc." He said and disappeared.

Paana Bhadra took the letter that the Lord granted him and left for Malainadu. He met the king and gave him the letter. Seeing that letter Cheraman Perumal rejoiced. The king read it again and again and felt happy. He ordered the ministers to give him all the wealth. He kept the wealth in front of Paana Bhadra and said, "Oh great man, Please accept all this wealth, take possession of all the army-chariots, horses, elephants, and soldiers and my kingdom." Hearing this Paana Bhadra said, "The Lord has commanded me to take only what is necessary for me and I shall do so." He accepted only the gems and the clothes and took these things on an elephant and reached Madurai.

As Perumakkodhayar was ruling the kingdom, one day, during the worship he could not hear the sound of the Lord's anklets. "O Lord! I must have committed some offence. The Lord is angry and has not blessed me with hearing the clinking sound of His anklets. My life is worthless." Saying this he took his sword and decided to end his life. Just then the Lord made him hear the clinking sound of His anklets.

When Cheraman asked the Lord why there was delay in hearing the sound of his anklets, He said, "Oh Chera, I was completely absorbed in my devotee, Van Thondan who had been singing praises about me and hence the delay in hearing the clinking sound of my anklets." Cheraman said, "Then I definitely have to visit Van Thondan and worship you there." The Chera king started for Thillai with his chariots, horses, elephants and soldiers. He then reached this great holy place that has the golden gopura (tower) entered the temple and bowed down to the Lord. The Lord showed His lotus feet that He had

raised to dance. The Chera king Perumal Nayanar became ecstatic, seeing the Lord. He composed and sang the song 'Ponvanna Thiruvandadi' in the temple itself.

The Lord who heard the Cheraman's Thiruvandadi made tinkling sounds with His anklets according to the music of the song and made Cheraman happy. Nayanar who heard the tinkling sound rejoiced and worshipped the Lord in Thillai.

One day he wished to see Nambi Aroorar. Cheraman started for Thiruvarur. Sundarar had just then reached Thiruvarur after visiting Nagaikkaronam where the Lord had blessed him with gold, gems, horses etc. Sundarar came to know that Cheraman Perumal Nayanar was coming to Thiruvarur to visit him. He made arrangements for his stay there. He and the people of that town went and welcomed him at the entrance of Thiruvarur. Both the devotees went to Lord Thyageesha temple. They worshipped the Lord by singing songs and later reached the house of Paravaiyar. Paravaiyar also welcomed them both and took care of them. She prepared a big feast with love and appeased Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and his attendants. Everyday both of them worshipped Lord Thyageesha.

One day Sundarar wished to visit Madurai and other places. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar started along with entourage. Sundarar also left after getting permission from Paravaiyar. They reached Madurai after visiting places like Nagappatinam, Thirumaraikkad (Vedaranya) and Thirupathoor etc. The Pandya king welcomed both of them with great pomp. Everyone reached the temple to worship Lord Chokkalinganatha. Both Sundarar and Nayanar sang songs in praise of the Lord with great devotion.

Since the Chola king had married Pandya King's daughter, the Chola king also lived in Madurai. Nambi Aroorar along with Chera, Chola, and Pandya king worshipped Lord Chokkanatha Peruman everyday. Later along with all the kings Sundarar reached a place called Thiruppuvanam and worshipped Lord Shiva there. After going back to Madurai, they reached Thiruppurankunram from there. There he bowed down to the Lord and requested Him to protect everybody.

Van Thondar wished to visit all the places in the Pandya kingdom. The Chera and the Pandya king made all the arrangements needed for Sundarar to travel and sent entourage along with him. He visited Kutralam, Thirunelveli, and Rameshwaram etc and worshipped the Lord. He bowed down to the holy place called Kedishwaram in Sri Lanka standing in Rameshwaram itself. The Lord appeared in Aroorar's dream in the form of a bull with flower ball in one hand. He pointed towards the place Thiru Yedagam and said, "We are in Kaanapper." Suddenly Sundarar got up from sleep mentioned about the dream to Cheraman and went along with him and reached Thirukaanaper (Kaalayar kovil). They worshipped Lord Shiva there and on the way visited all the holy places and reached Thiruvarur. Cheraman lived in Thiruvarur worshiping Lord Thyageesha and enjoyed Paravaiyar's hospitality but requested Sundarar to come to Malainadu everyday.

He got the permission from Paravaiyar and left for Malainadu. On the way he reached Thanjavur. The two of them who were on the southern shores of river Cauvery wished to worship Lord Panchanadeeshwara, which was on the northern shores. Without finding a way to cross the overflowing river Cauvery they stood on the

southern shores of the river itself and worshipped Panchanadeeshwara. Lord Shiva showed compassion like a mother cow sympathizes on hearing the calf's voice. By His grace river Cauvery slowed down the flow and made way for the devotees to pass through. Like a crystal mountain River Cauvery stood in one place. The remaining water found their way inside the sand. Praising the Lord, they crossed the river and worshipped Lord Panchanadeeshwara and returned by the same path. River Cauvery started flowing back normally. Later they reached the outskirts of Malainadu. The people of that kingdom made arrangements to welcome the king and his friend Sundarar. Sundarar had also got the name of Thambiran Tholan because of his friendship with Lord Shiva. Cheraman reached Kondungulur along with Nayanar. Nambi Aroorar who reached the temple of Thiruvanjaikalam sang songs in the praise of the Lord. Sundarar was made to sit on the royal female elephant and was fanned by the king himself. He later made him sit on his throne, washed his feet with perfumed water, applied perfume on him and garlanded him. Later both of them together watched dances, songs, listened to instrumental music, and watched water sports, etc.

Sundarar wished to have the darshan of Lord Thyageesha. Even though Cheraman Perumal did not wish to send him, he consoled him to continue his duty and left for Thiruvarur. Then Nayanar sent all the wealth and treasure that he had along with Sundarar.

Nambi Aroorar crossed Malainadu, deserts, forests, rivers etc and reached a place called Thirumurugan Poondi. The Lord thought that Sundarar had to accept things given by Him but was surprised to see Sundarar accept wealth from the king. So He ordered His attendants,

"You wear the costume of a hunter and steal Van Thondar's wealth." At that time the Lord's men took the form of a hunter's army and blocked the way where Aroorar came and surrounded his men who were carrying the wealth. "If you want to live leave all this wealth here and run away or else we shall kill you all if you do not want to listen to us." they said. Hearing this, the men left all the wealth there and ran away to save their lives. They all went to Sundarar and told him what had happened. Sundarar reached Lord Shiva's temple in Thirumurugan Poondi very fast. He went around the temple and with folded hands sang a song meaningfully- 'When You are with me is it right for the hunters to steal my wealth?' Then the hunters who had stolen the wealth forcefully came and made a big heap of it in front of the temple. Sundarar called the men and asked them to return all the wealth to Thiruvarur. Again he bowed down to the Lord and singing the praise of the Lord reached Thiruvarur.

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar who was separated from Aroorar remembered their friendship. He was ruling the kingdom staying in the capital itself. After sometime Sundarar left Thiruvarur and reached Cheraman's house.

On the way he reached a place called Avinashi, which is called as the Dakshina Kashi. There as he was walking in the Brahmin locality he saw two houses opposite each other. There he was surprised to see that from one of the houses sounds of festivity were heard but in the other house sounds of mourning were heard. Seeing this Sundarar asked a Brahmin, "What is the reason for this to happen at the same time?" At that moment the Brahmin told, "Two boys went to take bath in a pond. A crocodile swallowed one boy. The other boy

is alive for whom the thread ceremony is going on and that is why sounds of festivity are heard. Sounds of mourning are heard from the house that has lost the boy." Sundarar felt sad hearing this. Seeing him the Brahmin and his wife came to Sundarar and bowed down to him. Seeing the couple with a happy face even in their sadness, he asked them lovingly, "Are you the one who have lost your son?" Hearing this, the couple said, "That happened a long back. We wished to see you since long time and now our wish has come true."

Seeing the couple's devotion and their wish to prostrate to him even in their sadness, he thought, "I shall worship Avinashi Appan after I bring back their son alive." He reached the banks of the pond where their son took bath. "O Lord Shiva! Please command Yama to return back the son who was swallowed by the crocodile" he sang. By Lord Shiva's grace the boy who was swallowed by the crocodile two years back came back alive with the growth after two years. The mother who saw her son went and embraced him. Devatas showered flowers. The Brahmins became surprised. He had the darshan of Avinashi Appan, attended the thread ceremony of the boy and later reached Kondungulur. He was welcomed by the king and lived in the palace happily.

After spending quite a lot of time, one day when Cheraman Perumal was taking bath, Sundarar felt it was time for him to go to Kailasa. Sundarar started for Kailasa by climbing the white elephant that had been sent by Lord Shiva. Nayanar who finished taking bath came out and decided that he could not live without Sundarar in this world and climbed his horse and whispered the Panchaakshara Mantra and a few other mantras in the horse's ears. The horse started to fly in

the sky. He reached a place in the sky where Sundarar was sitting on the white elephant. He went around them and reached Kailasa. The soldiers of Cheraman Perumal saw their leader flying in the sky on the horse. After they saw him disappear, they killed themselves with their sword and reached the king in Kailasa. Sundarar who was going on the white elephant followed Nayanar who was on his horse and both reached the south entrance of Kailasa. Both of them got out of their vehicle walked down quite a long time and reached the entrance where the Lord resided. Cheraman Perumal who had not got the permission to go inside stopped there itself. Sundarar went forward and prostrated to the Lord. Like a calf run to his mother he went near the Lord and sang in praise of Him. Lord Shiva questioned Van Thondar, the emperor of devotion, "Dear son, have you come?" Then Sundarar said, "You forgave my mistakes and protected me. Your kindness is great. You gave me salvation." He again bowed down to Him. Sundarar then said, "O Gangadhara! Cheraman Perumal is standing at the entrance waiting to serve you." Lord Shiva who sent Nandi Devatha to bring him inside smiled at Chera king and asked him, "Why did you come here when I did not send for you?" With folded hands Cheraman Perumal said, "I came bowing to the lotus feet of Nambi Aroorar in front of his white elephant. Your kindness attracted me here. I have written the lyrics of a Prabhandha called Thiruvula. Please do listen to it and bless me."

Lord Shiva agreed to this and commanded him to sing the Prabhandha. Nayanar sang the Prabhandha that he had written. Lord Shiva was pleased and blessed him and Aroorar to live there and be the chief of His attendants (Ganas).

Nambi Aroorar became Alaala Sundarar and did the same service to the Lord as he did before like tying flowers and making garlands. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar became the chief of Lord Shiva's Ganas and worked sincerely. Goddess Umadevi blessed both Paravaiyar and Sangiliyar. They attained the form of Kamalini and Aninditha and did service to the Goddess by tying flowers and making garlands to the Goddess.

On the way to Kailasa on the white elephant Alaala Sundarar had sung some songs for the well being of the world, which he gave to Lord Varuna. Varuna Deva reached Thiruvanjaikalam temple and gave the Prabhandha to the people on the earth. He also propagated Thiruvula sung by Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. A poet by name Masathanath spread Gnanavula to the people at Thirukkadavur.

Karkonda Kodaikku Kalatrit Arivarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

39. Gananatha Nayanar

Gananatha Nayanar, a Brahmin lived in the great holy place, Seergazhi where Thirugnanasambandhar was born. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and served Thoniappar. He helped the devotees who took care of the temple garden, made flower garlands for the Lord, brought the holy water for the abhisheka, who light the lamps, compose songs in praise of the Lord and who chanted the Vedas.

Seeing his enthusiasm, people showed interest in serving Lord Shiva.

He had understood the truth that serving the devotees of the Lord is greater than serving the Lord Himself and worshipped Thirugnanasambandhar everyday. Later, he reached the abode of Lord Shiva by his great devotion and became the chief of all the ganas in Kailasa.

Bowing to the feet of Gananathar who understood the greatness of service to Lord Shiva and encouraged the people to do it, we shall next narrate the service of Kootruvanaar.

KadarkaalikGananatharkkum Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

40. Kootruva Nayanar

A noble man by name Kootruvar born in a Samantha (subordinate) king tribe lived in a place called Thirukkadambai. He was like a Kootruvan (Kootruvan-Yama) to his enemies because of his strength. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and also did service to the Lord's devotees. He had won over all the enemies and also had a powerful army which included chariots, elephants, horses, soldiers, but this king did not have the privilege of wearing a crown.

Kootruvar approached the Brahmins of Chidambaram and requested his inability to wear the crown, but they said that only the Chola kings were eligible for wearing a crown. Hearing this Kootruvar became sad. He thought 'Let the Lord's feet be my crown' and lived in Thillai itself. Lord Shiva appeared in his dream and placed His feet on his head and blessed him. The king acknowledged this crown as heavenly and indescribable. He was rejoiced and continued his service to the Lord.

He visited the temples of Lord Shiva, worshipped the Lord and finally attained His feet. Bowing to the feet of Kootruvar, I shall narrate the service of Poiadimai Illaadha Pudhalvar next.

Aarkkonda Verkootran Kalandaikkon Adiyen

—Sundarar

41. Poiyadimai Illadappulavar

Poiyadimai Illadappulavar was a great devotee of Neelakanta. He talked nothing but praise of Parameshwara and was always immersed in the ocean of Shivaleela. He enjoyed the hymns in praise of Lord Shiva. It is very difficult to express the greatness of such a devotee of Viroopaksha (Lord Shiva).

Bowing to him, I shall next narrate the service rendered by Pugal Chorar.

Poiyadimai Illadappulavarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

42. Pugal Chola Nayanar

The Chola kings have the greatness of hoisting their flag on top of Himalayas. Pugal Chola was born in the family of Anapaaya Chola who ruled the Chola kingdom with Uraiyur as the capital. He felt that taking care of the citizens was his duty, worshiping the Lord's devotees as his life's goal and lived his life worshipping Lord Shankara's feet with great devotion.

Pugal Chola went along with his family to a place called Karavur to collect the tax from Samantha (subordinate) kings. He worshipped Lord Shiva here and reached the palace. He sat on the throne and the Samantha kings offered him gems, gold, elephants, horses etc with great respect. Seeing this Pugal Chola became happy and gave permission to the Samantha kings to rule their country. He called the minister and asked, "Is there any Samantha king who has not given tax?" Then the minister said, "O king! A king by name Adhikan has built a fort on the nearest hill and lives there. He is

not giving tax regularly." Hearing this Pugal Chola said, "Is there anybody who can disobey orders! Go and destroy his fort and his army."

Quickly the minister and his troops surrounded the fort and tried to destroy Adhikan's fort and forests. Adhikan who was a Samantha king also fought courageously. Pugal Chola's army destroyed Adhikan's army and went inside the fort. Adhikan, who lost the battle left the kingdom, escaped and hid himself in the forest. The Chola's army that won shouted victoriously and came back to the city.

At the entrance of Karavur the Chola army presented heaps of heads they had killed in the battle. The king was rejoiced to see this and praised the power of his soldiers. As he saw the heaps of heads he was shocked and said, "Among these heads I am seeing a Shiva devotee with matted hair and with holy ash on his forehead! My soldiers have killed a Shiva devotee. There is no way to set this right."

My death is the only atonement. So he called his minister and explained what had happened and ordered him to crown his son as the king. He took the Shiva devotee's head, placed it on a gold plate, held it on his head and entered the fire. All the Gods praised and showered flowers on him. Thus he reached the abode of Lord Shiva.

After narrating the sacrifices done by Pugal Chola who was the greatest of all the Chola, Chera, and Pandya kings, I shall narrate the service done by Narasinga Munaiyar.

Polil Karavur Thunjiya Pugal Cholarkku Adiyen

— Sundarar

43. Narasingamunayaraya Nayanar

Narasingamunayarayar was the samantha (subordinate) king of the Thirumunaipaadi state. He thought vibhooti (the holy ash) as his wealth, vibhooti-smeared devotees as worthy to be worshipped and doing the service to the temple as service to the Lord. He did not even bother for his dear life in the work of service to the temple.

On the Aaridra star of the month of Dhanurmasa, at the time of worship of Lord Shiva, he gave away a minimum of 100 gold coins and offered food and shelter to all the devotees who came there on that day. When he saw a devotee of Lord Shiva, he would serve him without any discrepancy. One day, a very wicked man disguised as a devotee of Shiva came there. The other devotees who knew about him went away from him. But Narasingamunayarayar saw only the vibhoothi-smeared forehead and went near him and prostrated to him. He thought that it will be a great sin if the devotees are humiliated. He offered the wicked man food and 200 gold coins with great love and affection and sent him.

This way Narasingamunayarayar did service to the devotees with great love and affection and reached the holy feet of Lord Shiva.

Bowing to Narasingamunayarayar's holy feet, next I shall narrate the history of Athibaddha Nayanar.

Meiyaddiyaan Narasingamunayarayarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

44. Athibaddha Nayanar

Chola kings who belonged to the sun dynasty protected the banks of the River Cauvery and its surrounding areas. Nagappatinam was a great city, which is on the seashore. Nulaipaadi was a place on the shores of the sea where houses of fishermen were present. Athibaddhar was the head of a group of fishermen here. He was wealthy and worshipped Lord Shiva with great devotion.

At the sea Athibaddhar would let go all the fish that was caught in his net as an offering to Lord Shiva until he got an excellent fish in his net. Many days he could catch only one fish but let it go as he felt that it belonged to Lord Shiva. Once it so happened that for many successive days he could catch only one fish. He let them go into the sea. This way Athibaddhar's income came down. All his wealth became lesser day by day, but still Athibaddhar cheerfully threw the one fish that he caught into the sea without any grief. He did service to the Lord without fail.

One day the fishermen of his group did not get even one fish. Later a golden fish was found in the net that had lots of gems and was shining like the sun. The fishermen who saw this were surprised and took it to Athibaddhar. Seeing this, Athibaddhar felt that it belonged to Lord Shiva and threw it back into the sea.

Of the Eshanathrayas (strong worldly bonds)- Puthreshana (desire for children), Vitheshana (desire for wealth), Dhareshana (desire for wife) the sacrifice of Vitheshana, which Athibaddhar did, was impossible. Seeing Athibaddhar's devotion, Lord Shiva appeared on

the Holy bull and blessed him. Devatas showered flowers and sounds of musical instruments were heard from the sky. Seeing this Athibaddhar rejoiced and fell on the ground and prostrated to the Lord. He stood with folded hands above his head and worshipped the Lord. He was granted the wish to stay at His abode near Him and with other Shiva devotees.

Let us bow to the feet of Athibaddhar who being a fisherman did service to the Lord with great devotion. Next let us narrate the greatness of Kalikkamabarar.

Eriththirai Shool kadalnaagai Athibaddharkku Adiyen

—Sundarar

45. Kalikkamba Nayanar

A great man by name Kalikkamba Nayanar was born in a Vaishya family in a place called Thiruppennaghadam. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He was serving Shivakkolundunathar (name of Lord Shiva) in the temple of Thiruthoongaanaimadam. He was only interested in worshiping the Lord and serving his devotees and nothing else. He offered tasty food made of ghee, curd, milk, fruits, vegetables with rice. He also gave them gems and other precious stones.

Before serving the devotees with food, he washed their feet and invited them inside his house. His wife kept the food ready and then came to her husband to pour the water on the feet of the devotees while Kalikkambar washed them.

One day, at the time of this Paadapooja (washing the feet and worshiping it), there came a man who was

earlier working as a servant in Kalikkambar's house and then had quit the job. Disguised as a Shiva devotee he came and sat along with other devotees. His wife who knew his previous status hesitated for a second and stood there without pouring water to his feet. Nayanar saw this and became very angry. He got the water pot from his wife and with a knife cut off her hands for thinking lowly about a Shiva devotee. Then he poured the water on the feet of the devotee and invited him inside. He himself served the food to everybody and made them feel very happy.

Let us bow to the lotus feet of Kalikkambar who cut his wife's hands for thinking lowly about a devotee and lived his life serving the devotees. Next I shall narrate the greatness of Kaliya Nayanar.

Kai Thadittha Verishilaiyaan Kalikkamban
Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

46. Kaliya Nayanar

Thiruvatriyur is an excellent holy place of Lord Shiva. Here people belonging to the caste of oil making lived in a street by name Chakkrapadi. Kaliyar was born in this caste. He was highly devoted to Lord Shiva. His parents were proud of their son's devotion to the Lord. He did the service of illuminating the lamps day and night in the temple of Thiruvatriyur. The temple was shining by the illumination of the lamps.

Lord Shiva wished to show the world the greatness of Kaliya Nayanar. Hence Kaliya Nayanar's wealth started reducing like the fading moon of the Krishnapaksha.

Even after losing all his wealth, Kaliya Nayanar did not stop lighting lamps in the temple. He got the oil from the rich people of his caste, and the money he got as wages, he used for lighting the lamps. Later the rich men stopped giving him oil.

Feeling sad he went to the oil-churning place, he churned oil by running the oxen and got oil as wages and lit the lamps in the temple. Day-by-day even this became impossible. Hence he started selling things in his house and continued doing his service to the Lord. After selling all of his things, he roamed on the streets of Thiruvatriyur to sell his wife, but no one would buy and finally he was distressed and went to the temple.

Kaliya Nayanar who entered the temple at the time of lighting the lamps decided that he better die if there is delay in lighting the lamps. He put the wick in all the lamps and decided that he light up all the lamps with his blood. He tried to cut his neck, when Lord Shiva appeared held his hand and blessed him. The wound that was made on his neck disappeared by Lord's grace. Later Shashichooda (Lord Shiva) took him to His abode.

I shall narrate the service done by Shakthi Nayanar after bowing to the lotus feet of Kaliya Nayanar who tried to cut his neck when he could not do the service of lighting the lamps in Lord Shiva temple.

Kaliyan.... Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

47. Shakti Nayanar

In the Chola kingdom, the land where river Cauvery flows was a very fertile land. There is a place called Virinchaiyur in this fertile land. Here a great man was born in a peasant family. He was a devotee of Lord Shiva. If anyone abused Lord Shiva, he would pull their tongue and cut it. He always had a weapon like tongs to pull and scissors to cut the tongue of people who abused Lord Shiva or Shiva devotees. Such was his love and devotion for Lord Shiva. Later, in course of time, he attained the Lord's feet.

Let us bow down to the feet of Shakthi Nayanar who slit the tongue of people who abused Lord Shiva. I shall next render the service done by Aiyadigal Nayanar.

Kalarshakthi Varinchaiyarkon Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

48. Ayyadigal Kaadavarkon Nayanar

Ayyadigal Kaadavarkon was a Pallava king who was ruling the kingdom successfully. He made Kanchipuram as the capital and ruled the kingdom following the laws of Manu Dharma and treated the citizens as his own children. He infused the spirit of Shaivism and Vedas, learnt Sanskrit and Dravidian languages, read the books in those languages became a scholar, assimilated it and was ruling the kingdom effectively.

Ayyadigal Kaadavarkon felt that ruling the kingdom was a barrier in doing the service to the Lord. Hence

he crowned his son as the king and started doing service to the Lord. He visited various important shrines and in each temple he composed and sang songs in praise of the Lord and dedicated them to Him.

He visited Chidambaram, worshipped Lord Nataraja, sang songs in the praise of the Lord and lived there for sometime. Later from there he went on a pilgrimage to other temples, sang songs, worked for the welfare of Shiva's devotees and lived there.

Ayyadigal Kaadavarkon Nayanar reached the holy feet of the Lord after living for sometime. Bowing to the lotus feet of Ayyadigal Kaadavarkon Nayanar next I shall narrate the service done by Kanampulla Nayanar.

Ayyadigal Kaadavarkon Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

49. Kanampulla Nayanar

There lived a Shiva devotee in a place called Irukuvelur. He was the head of this place. He was a very wealthy and virtuous man. He thought that God is truth and lighting lamps in the temple is Janma saphalya (making one's birth in this world successful). He put oil and lit all the lamps in the temple. He also sang in praise of the Lord.

As time passed by, he lost all his wealth. But still he continued to light the lamps by selling the objects in his house. After all the things in his house were sold, he started to cut the hay that had been used to cover the roof of his house. He lit the lamps by selling the hay. One day nobody bought the hay that he had cut.

So he kept the hay as a wick in the lamps and lit them. But soon the hay got over. Deciding that somehow he had to continue his service to Lord Shiva, he folded his hair as a wick and his head as the lamp and lit it. Lord Shiva who saw Nayanar's devotion appeared in front of him and took him to Kailasa.

He sold hay, called as kanam, and came to be known as Kanampulla Nayanar. Let us bow to the feet of Kanampulla Nayanar who sold hay and did the great service of lighting the lamps in the temple. Next I shall narrate the service done by Kaarinayanar.

Kanampullanambikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

50. Kaarinayanar

A great brahmin by name of Kaari Nayanar lived in a place called Thirukkadavur. Being a scholar in Dravidian language he has composed a poem in his name itself called Kaarikovai, which expresses a form of Moksha (liberation of soul from the cycle of birth and death forever). He made acquaintances with Chera, Chola, and Pandya, made them happy by recitation and explanation of this poem and obtained immeasurable wealth from them.

He utilized the wealth in building temples of Lord Shiva. He spoke with great love and affection to the devotees of Lord Shiva and also gave them money, gems and expensive things. He always had contemplation about Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva.

This way he became famous around the world, got

the blessings from the Lord by meditation, and later reached Kailasa.

After bowing to the feet of Kaari Nayanar who was always engrossed in meditation of the lotus feet of the Lord, I shall next narrate the service done by Nedumaara Nayanar of Madurai.

Kaarikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

51. Ninrasheer Nedumaara Nayanar

Madurai is a great city of the Pandya kingdom. Because of his sinful deeds Nedumaara Nayanar, the Pandya king believed Jainism was the greatest religion and became a follower. Later he converted to Shaivism by Thirugnanasambandhar. He became deeply interested in chanting Shiva Panchakshara mantra and spread the devotion of Lord Shiva throughout the country.

With the help of his army of soldiers, elephants, horses and chariots, he fought with a king who had come from the north and surrounded the Pandya kingdom. He won the battle and dispelled the king and his army.

He married Mangaiyarkarasiyar, the daughter of the Chola king and with his wife continued to spread Shaivism and the greatness of Lord Shiva.

Let us bow down to the lotus feet of King Nedumaran who was blessed by Sambandar and protected Madurai. Next I shall narrate the service done by Vaayilaar.

Ninrasheer Nedumaaran Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

52. Vaayilaar Nayanar

In the Dravida kingdom, Mylapore was a place where great devotees of Lord Shiva lived. This place stood magnificently on the shores of the sea. As the people celebrated festivals everyday, here, the streets would be decorated throughout the year. In this place a great man by name Vaayilaar was born who belonged to the farmer's community.

He had his own unique way of serving the Lord. With his mind as the temple, knowledge as the lamp, bliss as anointment, he decorated the Lord with love and mentally adored the Lord with flowers and did spiritual worship.

Seeing Vaayilaar do spiritual worship Lord Shiva took him to His abode.

Praising Vaayilaar who by doing spiritual (Manasika) worship reached the Lord let us next narrate Munaiyaduvaar Nayanar's service to the Lord.

Thon Mayilai Vaayilaan Adiyarkkum Adiyen

— Sundarar

53. Munaiyaduvar Nayanar

The Chola kingdom was a very prosperous kingdom. Thiruneedoor was one such fertile town. In this place, there was a peasant who was a generous man and was a great devotee of Lord Shiva.

He won over the enemies in the battle and with the money he got from this, he served Lord Shiva and Shiva's devotees. He offered generously to the devotees. He gave them more than what they expected. He also helped the people who had lost in the battle. He fought against their enemies for them in the battle in such a way that even Yama would fear to fight with him. The wealth he acquired from his victory was distributed among the devotees.

This is the reason why people called him, 'Munaiyaduvar'. Munai = battlefield, aduvar = one who wins. He generously gave away jaggery, fruits, rice, ghee, vegetables, curds, milk and other provisions apart from precious stones to the needy.

He served the people his whole life and reached the heavenly abode in due course of time. Bowing down to the flower feet of Munaiyaduvar Nayanar, I shall next narrate the service done by Kalarchinga Nayanar.

Araikkonda Velnambi Munaiyaduvaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

54. Kalarchinga Nayanar

There was a king by name Kalarchingar who was born in Pallava caste. Kalal-anklet. He got the name Kalarchingar, as he wore anklets on his legs and was brave, magnificent, and tough like a lion. He was called as Nandiverma the third. His queen's name was Shanga. She was Amoghavarsha Nrupathunga's daughter.

Kalarchingar was involved only in worshiping the lotus feet of Gangadhaari and nothing else. He conquered the enemy in the north and ruled the kingdom efficiently.

He derived happiness in visiting holy places of Lord Shiva and worshiping the Lord. He went with his family to the holy places and reached Thiruvarur. As he wished to see Lord Thyagesha quickly, he entered the temple sanctum speedily and started worshiping the Lord.

The queen who came with him walked slowly seeing all the sculptures present at each and every corner of the temple. After sometime, she came across a place where flowers were being tied to make garlands for the Lord. She saw a flower that had fallen down. She picked it up from the ground and smelt it. Seeing this, a devotee by name Sheer Thunaiyar was annoyed. He thought that she smelt the flower that has been brought for worship of Lord Shiva. He felt it was a big mistake and cut the queen's nose. The queen fell down and started crying in pain. After worshiping the Lord, Kalarchingar came and saw the situation and asked, "Who dared to do this brutal act?"

In a while Sheer Thunaiyar came there and explained what had happened. Hearing this, the king said, "It's her hand that has taken the Lord's flower and hence her

hand has to be severed." Saying this he took out the sword from his waist and severed the queen's hand. Even though he knew it was his loving wife, the queen, he felt that it was an insult to Lord Shiva. The Devatas who saw this showered flowers and all the devotees chanted 'Harahara'.

Kalarchingar ruled the kingdom for a long-time and then later reached Lord Shiva.

Let us bow to the holy feet of Kalarchingar who felt that anybody who has committed an offence to Lord Shiva must be punished. Next I shall narrate the story of Idankali Nayanar.

Kaadavarkon Kalarchingar Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

55. Idankali Nayanar

Kodumbaalur was the capital of Konad. The main shikara of the temple of that place was covered with gold by the Chola king Aaditya Chola. A great man by name, Idankalaiyar was born in this Chola family. He spent his life in the service of Lord Shiva and he spread Shaivism throughout the country. When he was ruling the kingdom, he offered delicious food for all the people everyday.

One day, he did not have anything to give to the people. He felt very sad and the whole day he was brooding. At night he entered the palace to steal. The royal guards found him stealing food grains. When the king asked him the reason for stealing, he said "Oh King, I have taken an oath to serve the devotees of Lord Shiva

with food everyday. As I did not have anything to give to the devotees, I came here to steal the food grains."

Hearing this, the king said that the granary is not the real storage place but the grains reaching the stomach of the people is the right place where the food should be. Then he made an announcement that people could take away not only food grains but also take treasure from the vault without any fear.

The people who heard this took the things required and served the devotees. Seeing this the king became very happy.

Idankali Nayanar served the people for a long time and later reached the lotus feet of the Lord. Bowing to Idankali Nayanar, I shall next tell the service done by Sheruthunayar.

Nambi Idankalikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

56. Sheruthonai Nayanar

Keelai Thanjavur is a great place in the Chola kingdom where the river Cauvery flows. A Shiva devotee by name Sheruthunayar lived in this place. He belonged to the Velaalar caste. Being a great devotee of Lord Shiva, he lived in Thiruvarur doing service to the Lord. He sang songs in praise of the Lord and worshipped Lord Thyagesha.

One day the Pallava king, Kalarchingar and his queen came to the temple to worship the Lord. The queen came across a place where garlands were being tied for the Lord. She saw a flower that had fallen down,

picked it up and smelt it. Seeing this Sheruthunayar became furious and severed her nose with a sharp knife, as she had smelt the flower intended for the Lord. This way, Sheruthunayar, guiding the people to do their duties, lived here serving the Lord and later reached Lord Shiva's abode.

Bowing to the feet of Sheruthonayar Nayanar let me next narrate the greatness of Pugalthonayar.

Thanjaimannavanaam Sheruthonaithan
Adiyaarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

57. Pugaltunai Nayanar

There was a place called Sheruviliputtur near Kumbakonam. Pugaltunaiyar was born in a Brahmin family here. He was interested in serving Lord Shiva who held the Meru mountain as his bow. He served the Lord by getting water for Lord's abhisheka-the sacred bath, offering the naivedya, doing archana, cleaning the sanctum besides other things.

At this time, there was famine in the country. People did not get enough food to eat. Many people died of hunger. But Pugaltunaiyar decided to serve the Lord even if he becomes weak or whatever be the situation. He used to do the pooja as usual.

One day, when Pugalthunayar was doing abhisheka, due to weakness of not having food and water, the pot of water he was carrying for the Lord's pooja, fell down on the Lord's head and broke. He fell down on the ground. He became exhausted and slept there itself. At

that time, Lord Parameshwara appeared in his dream and told him, "I shall give you a gold coin everyday until the famine subsides." He then disappeared. Pugaltunaiyar woke up from his sleep. He saw the gold coin near the Lord's idol and with happiness bowed down to the Lord.

This way he got a gold coin everyday till the famine subsided and served the God for a long time. Later he attained the lotus feet of the Lord at Kailasa.

Praising the lotus feet of Pugalthunayar who was blessed by the Lord, next I shall narrate the service done by Kotpuliyar.

Ponnadikke Manamvaithu Pugal Ponaikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

58. Kotpuli Nayanar

A Shiva devotee by name Kotpuliyar lived in Thirunaatiyathaankudi. He was born in a farming community. He was a commander-in-chief for the Chola king. He got fame and recognition by defeating the enemies. The king was pleased with this and gave him a lot of gifts with which he bought grains and offered it to Lord Shiva. This was his service to the Lord.

Once he had to follow the King's orders and go to battlefield. At that time he stocked a sufficient quantity of grains and called his relatives and said, "You should not use these grains on any account as it is meant for offering to Lord Shiva. This is a promise. You should not even think of touching the grains." He then proceeded on his duty to the battlefield.

A few days after Kotpuliyar left, there was famine

in the country. Kotpuliyar's friends and family thought that that they would use the grains instead of starving and later during good times replace it back with the grains.

Kotpuliyar fought the battle courageously and made the enemies flee for their lives. He won the battle and came back. He was rewarded by the king and was returning back to his hometown. On his way back home he came to know of the offence his relatives had committed. He did not express it outside that he knew about this matter but decided to kill all his relatives.

His friends and relatives welcomed him as he was coming home. Kotpuliyar spoke to them lovingly and came back home.

He invited his relatives to his house saying that he would give them money and fine clothes. All his relatives reached his mansion joyously. He acted as though he would give them wealth. He kept a security in front of his house that had the same name Kotpuli. He said, "You have insulted the promise made to the Lord by using the grains without shame to protect this mortal body. I shall kill you all." Saying this he took out his sword and killed his parents, wife, relatives, servants and others who had committed this sin.

At the end, Nayanar tried to kill one boy baby that was alive. Seeing this with folded hands the guard requested, "This baby has not stolen the grains and please do not kill this baby."

Hearing this Kotpuli Nayanar said that the baby had not eaten the grains, but had drunk the breast milk of the mother who had accepted the grains. Saying this he threw the baby to the sky to make him fall on the

knife and killed the baby. At that moment Lord Shiva appeared and said, "Your relatives who have been killed by your sword shall be liberated of their sins and live happily and later reach me. You come with me." He said lovingly and took Kotpuliyar along with Him.

Let us bow to the feet of Kotpuliyar who killed his own family and relatives for the Lord. Next let me elucidate the qualities of Poosalar Nayanar.

Adalshoolinda Velnambikotpulikkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

59. Poosalaar Nayanar

There lived a Brahmin who was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva called Poosalaar in the Dravida kingdom in a place called Thiruninravoor. He had surrendered himself to the Lord. He had learned the Vedas thoroughly. He decided that serving the Lord and His devotees was the main duty in his life.

He wished to build a temple to the Lord Shashanka Shekara. He gathered and saved things and money needed for this purpose. But could not get enough and felt extremely disappointed and sad. Then he decided to construct a beautiful temple in his mind and tried collecting things needed for this in his mind itself. He decided on an auspicious day and time for the Bhoomipooja. As per the Shivgama he did the Bhoomipooja at the auspicious time and laid the foundation with great devotion. In his thoughts he employed carpenters, masons and everyone and explained the role they were expected to do. Day and night everybody did their job faithfully

and properly. He completed the altar and all the inner places of the abode. Stupas were laid. The beauty of the temple was increased by erecting sculptures. Beautiful statues were made of concrete in the gopuras. He dug a well and then built a Pushkarani (temple lake). An auspicious day was also fixed for the Lord Shiva's idol to be erected in the temple which he had built mentally.

At the same time, the Pallava king built a magnificent temple of Lord Shiva at Kanchipuram and decided to install the idol of the Lord there on an auspicious day. It was the same day Poosalaar had decided to do the kumbhabhishekam to his mentally built temple. The previous night of that day the Lord appeared in the Pallava king's dream and told him, "There is a great devotee by name Poosal at Thiruninravoor. Since many days he has been thinking and building a temple with great devotion. I shall be entering that temple tomorrow. So, fix another day for the kumbhabhishekam of your temple." Lord Shiva said this to show the great service of Poosalar to the world. The Pallava king who got up from the sleep thought that he would go and bow down to the devotee whom the Lord Himself praised. The king reached Thiruninravoor along with his army. He asked about the temple built by Poosalaar. People told him that there was no such temple built by Poosalaar.

Then the king met all the Brahmin scholars of that place. He bowed down to them and asked them about Poosalaar. "He is a Brahmin who belongs to this place," the Brahmins replied and went to bring him. Then the Pallava king, Kaadavarkon himself went to the place where Poosalaar was living. He bowed down to him and told him, "Oh great man! Where is the temple that you have built for Lord Shiva? The Lord Himself hinted to

me that today is the installation of that temple. So I came to see and bow down to you."

Hearing the king's words, the great devotee, Poosalaar was excited and thrilled to know that the Lord Himself had considered him as a true devotee and blessed him in this way. "Oh king, I tried to build a temple for Lord Shiva, but I did not succeed. So I built a temple in my mind." he said and explained him the way he built the temple in his thoughts. The king was very surprised to hear this. He felt that the greatness of devotees is unmatchable. He sang and praised him and fell on the ground and prostrated him. He then got Poosalaar's permission and went back to his place with his family and his army. Poosalaar everyday worshipped the Lord in his mentally built temple for many years and later reached the lotus feet of the Lord.

Bowing down to Poosalar who worshiped the Lord in his mentally built temple, I shall next tell the service done by Nesanayanar.

Manniyasheer Marainaavan Ninravoor Poosal Adiyen

—Sundarar

60. Nesanayanar

A city by name Kampili was a little away from the banks of the river Thungabadra. There lived a great man by name Nesar who was born in a weaver's community. He lived his life doing the job of weaving and was appreciated by one and all. He was highly devoted to the Lord's devotees and always chanted the Panchaakshara. He weaved loincloth, blankets and other clothes and offered it to the devotees of Lord Shiva. This way he did service to the Lord. He reached the Lord's abode by His blessings.

Prostrating to him, next I shall tell the greatness of Kochingatchola king who built temples for Lord Shiva.

Nesanukkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

61. Kocchengatchola Nayanar

There was an emperor named Shibi in the Chola kingdom. He was such a great king who cut his own flesh and kept it on the balance to save the pigeon which took shelter in his kingdom. The river Cauvery which flows in this kingdom brings pearls and rubies and makes the land fertile. On the banks of the river Cauvery, there was a lake called Chandratheertha. There was a Jambu tree in the thick forest near the lake. Lord Shiva self emerged, under this tree.

There was a Shivagana by name Pushpadatta who at the time of Shivapooja showed displeasure and anger

and so was cursed to become a white elephant. This white elephant roamed in the same forest that the Lord had self emerged. Due to the good deeds in its previous birth, the elephant showed great devotion as soon as it saw the Lord under the tree. It brought water from the lake and did abhisheka to the Lord. The elephant got flowers from the forest and did archana to Lord Shiva. As this place was worshipped by an elephant, the place came to be known as Thiruvanaikka (Thiru + Aanaikka).

There was a Shivagana by name Malyawan. He expressed displeasure and anger at the time of the Lord's worship. He was cursed and became a spider. This spider had woven a web on Lord Shiva to prevent Sun rays and old leaves falling on it. When the elephant came to worship the Lord, it saw the spider web and destroyed it. The spider thought that the elephant had unknowingly destroyed the web with its trunk and rebuilt the web again on the next day. The elephant destroyed the web the next day also. The spider got angry and went inside the elephant's trunk and bit it. The elephant could not tolerate the pain, and so it hit its trunk hard on the ground but fell down and died. Because the elephant hit the trunk hard the spider which was inside the trunk also died. Shiva blessed the elephant and gave moksha. The Lord blessed the spider to be born as a Chola king.

At that time, the Chola king, Shubhadeva along with his queen Kamalavalli reached Chidambaram and served Lord Nataraja. They were childless. So, Kamalavalli prayed to the Lord to beget a child. The Lord blessed the spider that did great service to the Lord to be born as the king's child. Kamalavalli became pregnant. When the time of birth of the child was nearing, the astrologers predicted that if the child is born after a second, the

child will rule all the three worlds. Hearing this, the queen ordered that she be hung upside down to prevent the birth of the child till the specified time. After a second they untied her and she gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. As there was a second's delay in the birth, the child's eyes had become red. The queen saw the baby and breathed her last. Shubhadeva brought up his son and gave the kingdom to him. He then went to a forest and did penance. After some years, he reached the heavenly abode of the Lord.

Kocchengat Chola was fortunate to be the ancestor of Anapaya Kulotthunga Chola and others. By God's grace, Kocchengat Chola reminisced the deeds of his previous birth and protected the world. He built many wonderful temples for Lord Shiva at various places. He thought this as his service to Lord Shiva. He went to the place of his previous service, Thiruvanaikka and built a temple for the Lord who resides under the Jambul tree. He sent his ministers to all the places in the country and built Shiva temples in all the places. He gave agricultural land, food grains and money needed for the maintenance of the temples.

Kocchengat Chola's fame spread in all directions. He went to Chidambaram and bowed down to Lord Nataraja and became very happy. He built houses for the 3000 Brahmin men who lived there. This way he did service to the Lord living in Chidambaram itself and later reached the lotus feet of the Chidambareshwara. Bowing to the holy feet of this king, next I shall narrate the service of Thiruneelakantayazhpanar who won over the Lord by singing in praise of Him.

Thannavanaai Oulagaanda Chenganaarkku Adiyen

— Sundarar

62. Thiruneelakantayazhpana Nayanar

Thiruneelakantayazhpanar lived in a place called Thiruperukkathampuliyur. He was born in a family of musicians. He praised the Lord by playing a string instrument called Yazh and hence he got the name as Yazhpanar. His wife, Mathanga Choodamani was very beautiful and also had a great knowledge in singing.

The couple visited Shiva temples in the Chola kingdom and then reached Madurai. As they were not allowed to enter the temple because of their caste, they stood at the entrance of the temple and played the instrument praising Lord Shiva's pastime. It was so good that it could put the celestial musicians (Gandharva Kinnaru) to shame. He played different songs in different ragas appropriate to the occasion. Lord Somasundareshwara, who heard the songs, was so delighted that he appeared in all of his devotees' dreams and commanded them to bring Panar in front of Him. Next day after sunrise all the Lord's devotees took Thiruneelakantayazhpanar inside the temple. Yazhpanar prostrated to Lord Shiva and expressed his joy by playing Yazh in praise of the Lord's pastimes. He sang songs of the Lord's pastimes like Thripura Samhara, Gajaasura Samhara, Manmatha Dahana, Brahma and Vishnu trying to find Lord Shiva's head and feet etc. He sang the songs with great joy and devotion. The Lord who heard his Yazh's wonderful sound said, "If Panar's Yazh is kept on the ground, the strength of the strings will be reduced and it will become cold and so place a bench in front of him." The devotees who heard this brought a gold bench and placed it in front of him. Panar sat on this bench and played the instrument in the praise of the Lord.

Later Panar wished to visit other Shiva temples and hence he left Madurai and reached Thiruvarur. He sat at the entrance of the temple as per the custom, praised and sang the Lord's kindness along with playing on the Yazh. Hearing his songs Lord Shiva blessed him by opening another door in the northern direction in favor of Panar. Thiruneelakantayazhpanar entered through that door worshipped Him and sang in His presence.

After staying in Thiruvarur for sometime he visited all the Shiva temples on the way and reached Seergali. There he bowed to the feet of Thirugnanasambandhar and played the Dhashakas composed by Sambandhar himself. He stayed with him for sometime and later along with Thirugnanasambandhar reached the Lord's feet in Thirunallur.

This way bowing to the holy feet of Perumpanar let me next narrate the greatness of Shadayanayanar and Isaignaniyar.

Thiruneelakantathupananarkkum Adiyen

—Sundarar

63. Shadaya Nayanar, Ishaigyaniyar Nayanar

Due to the good deeds in his previous birth, Sundaramurthy Nayanar had befriended the Lord Himself. Such a great man's father was Shadaya Nayanar and mother was Ishaigyaniyar. Born in a Brahmin family, the greatness of this couple is beyond words who gave birth to such a great man.

Ennavanaam Aranadiye Adaindhitta
Shadayan.....Adiyen
Isaigyani.....Adiyen

— Sundarar

64. Manikkavachagar

Manikkavachagar was born in a Brahman family in a place called Thiruvaadhavur near Madurai. His parents called him Thiruvadhavurar, which is also the name of his place. The Pandya king heard about his knowledge and wisdom and was brought to the kingdom. He was made one of his ministers. After seeing his efficiency in administration the king gave him the title of 'Thennavan Bramharayan'. Even as Thiruvadhavurar was administering the kingdom efficiently, his heart was engrossed in the devotion of Lord Shiva. Slowly he became detached from worldly pleasures.

The Pandya king heard that Arabi kingdom's horses were for sale on the shores of the sea in the Chola kingdom. He sent for Thiruvadhavurar to buy them. With his family he started the journey. On the way in a place called Thiruperunthurai he saw a Guru sitting under a tree. He looked like the Lord's blessings personified as a teacher. Like iron getting attracted to magnet, a river merging into the ocean, a creeper growing towards sunlight Thiruvadhavurar got attracted to the teacher and prostrated at his feet. It is told that Lord Shiva himself appeared as the Guru and attracted Thiruvadhavurar. The money he had got for purchasing the horses was spent on doing service to the Lord. He had forgotten the king's commands and the work given to him. He was fully engrossed in being with Shiva's devotees and doing service to the Guru who gave him knowledge about the Lord. The Pandya king who heard about all this became angry and sent an order that Thiruvadhavurar be captured and brought. He became aware of the mistake only when the soldiers came and surrounded him. He bowed to his

Guru and asked what he should do. At that moment, the Guru who was the Lord personified blessed him and told him to tell the king that the horses would arrive on the auspicious day of Moola star, in the month of Shravana.

The king who heard this acknowledged without suspicion. He later came to know from the messengers that there were no horses in Thiruperunthurai and became angry. On the auspicious day as predicted, the king saw a messenger bringing beautiful horses and was rejoiced. But later that night all the horses had turned into foxes and disappeared. The king had become very disappointed. Due to adverse happenings that took place the Pandya king became hostile and Thiruvadhavurar got both appreciation and punishment one after the other. One who is fully engrossed in devotion will find no discrepancy in worldly pleasures and displeasures. They will not acknowledge praise. Punishment will only increase their devotion like gold glows when heated. The Lord wished to teach the world this truth through Thiruvadhavurar.

The first offence was spending the money that was meant for administrative work for other purposes. The second offence was bringing the foxes inside the capital by trickery instead of horses. The Pandya king imprisoned Thiruvadhavurar for these offences and punished him cruelly. This punishment made Thiruvadhavurar become stronger. He felt, 'what I did was service to Lord Shiva. We have been born as a human to serve the Lord. The money that was spent belongs to Shiva. The sufferings that I have got also are Lord Shiva's and hence I should not think it as hardship but accept it as the Lord's pastimes. To accept it this way my devotion should become stronger and the Lord Himself gives this devotion.'

"O Lord! Give me firm, intimate devotion to serve your lotus feet," he prayed.

Thiruvadhavurar's ordinary devotion was purified by his sufferings. A devastating flood started in river Vaigai and many houses on the banks of the river were destroyed. Seeing this situation the Pandya king ordered one person from each house to come with a basket and a spade and strengthen the designated part of the banks of the river. Everyone in that town sent a person to represent their house. A Shiva devotee by name Vandhi lived alone at home. She earned her livelihood by preparing and selling Puttu (food). At that time she could not find any labourer for help. She felt sad and prayed to Lord Chokkanatha. At that time a young man came to her house and said, "Amma! It is enough if you give me the powdered Puttu as wages. I shall strengthen the part of the banks that has been allotted for you. Now as I am hungry can you give me the Puttu before my job?"

Oh, What a surprise! When she opened the Puttu pot she saw that it was all powdered. He ate the Puttu and went to the banks of the river Vaigai. He wasted the time by playing instead of finishing his work. The supervisor went and told the king about this matter. The king became angry and thrashed the labourer on his back with a golden rod. This blow hit the backs of all the living beings in the world. The king experienced the blow himself and suffered with pain. The labourer disappeared!

Devotion of any kind to the Lord will bring happiness. The Pandya king's misconduct was like an indication. The king who experienced the blow got enlightenment. He hurried to Thiruvadhavurar and said, "What I felt belongs to me, truly belongs to the Lord. You did the

right thing of spending the wealth on the devotees of Lord Shiva. He has the supreme power and capable of turning horses into foxes and foxes into horses. He has taught me a lesson not to aspire for worldly pleasures. Because of your greatness, Lord Shiva appeared before us as a horseman. I committed the sin of thrashing the Lord who appeared as a servant for you and for the old lady. He is kind-hearted and blesses people who worship him. I have now become a Shiva devotee because of your friendship. What can I do for you?" To this Thiruvadhavurar said, "I want to accept Sanyasa (renunciation). Please permit me to do so." The king praised him and granted his wish.

The Lord helped him accept sanyasa by His leela vinodha (pastime). Like a deer that leaps to reunite with the group after getting lost he swiftly reached the holy place of Thiruperunthurai. There he saw the teacher sitting with his disciples under a tree and felt rejoiced. Then he proceeded to Chidambaram.

There are two circumstances that are of great help for a self- achiever. The first one is the teacher's blessings and the service he does to the teacher. The second one is having good company. Vadhavurar had obtained both of them. Hence his self-achievement became successful.

Lord Shiva disappeared after ensuring that his disciple had achieved thorough knowledge. The Shiva devotees went back to Kailasa. As per teacher's instruction Thiruvadhavurar started spreading knowledge to devotees. He composed a wonderful poetry called Thiruvaachakam.

Thiruvaachakathirkkum Urugaar
Oruvaachakathirkkum Urugaar

Which means one who is not moved with devotion

and does not shed joyful tears after hearing the Thiruvaachakam songs cannot appreciate any other songs.

He spent his final moments in Chidambaram and became one with Lord Shiva.

If a man is an expert in one subject he is considered as the authority in that subject. As Manikkavachagar administered the kingdom well he was considered the king of the land. As he composed excellent songs, Thiruvaachakam, was considered the king of poets. Manikkavachagar was also considered as the king of devotion and meditation. This great soul, Manikkavachagar, became one with the Lord.

Thirucchitrambalam

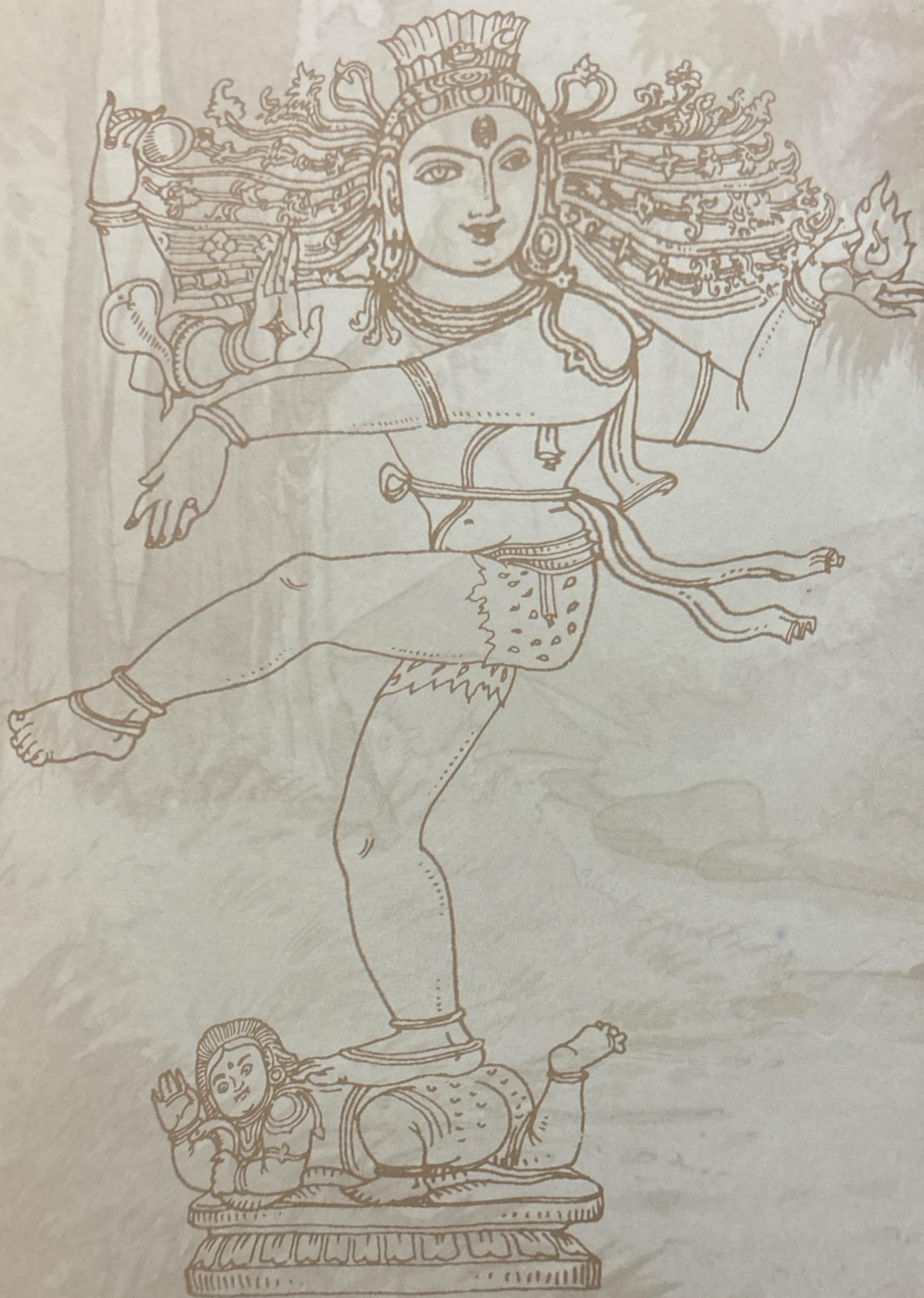
Namah Shivaya

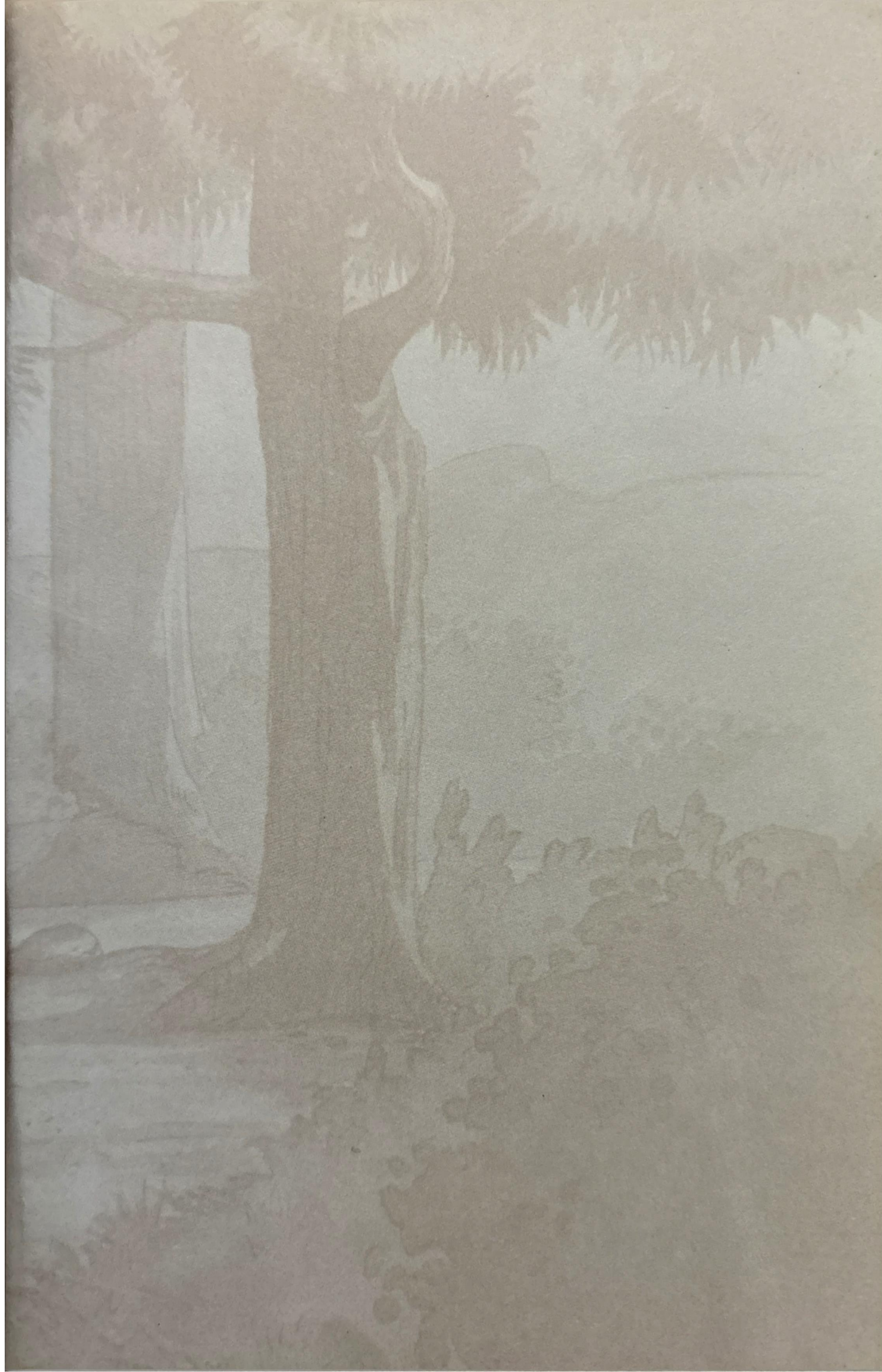




vaṭaviṭapisamīpe bhūmibhāge niṣaṇṇaṁ
sakalamunijanānāṁ jñānadātāramārāt ।
tribhuvanagurumīśaṁ dakṣiṇāmūrtidevaṁ
jananamaraṇaduḥkhacchedadakṣaṁ namāmi ॥

I bow down to the Deity Dakṣiṇāmūrti who is sitting on the ground near the banyan tree, giving instant knowledge to all the sages (that have approached Him), the teacher of the three worlds, the Lord capable of destroying the agony of birth and death.





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